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FANTASY AND HORROR MAGAZINE



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**KING OF THE MONSTERS**

# GODZILLA



**HAZARDOUS CONTENTS**

- GARETH EDWARDS REVEALS ALL
- ELIZABETH OLSEN FACES HER FEARS
- BRYAN CRANSTON ON THE ORIGINAL
- THE 15 GREATEST GIANT MONSTERS

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**PARTY ON, DUDES!**

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OF EXCELLENCE**

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**Digital Edition**

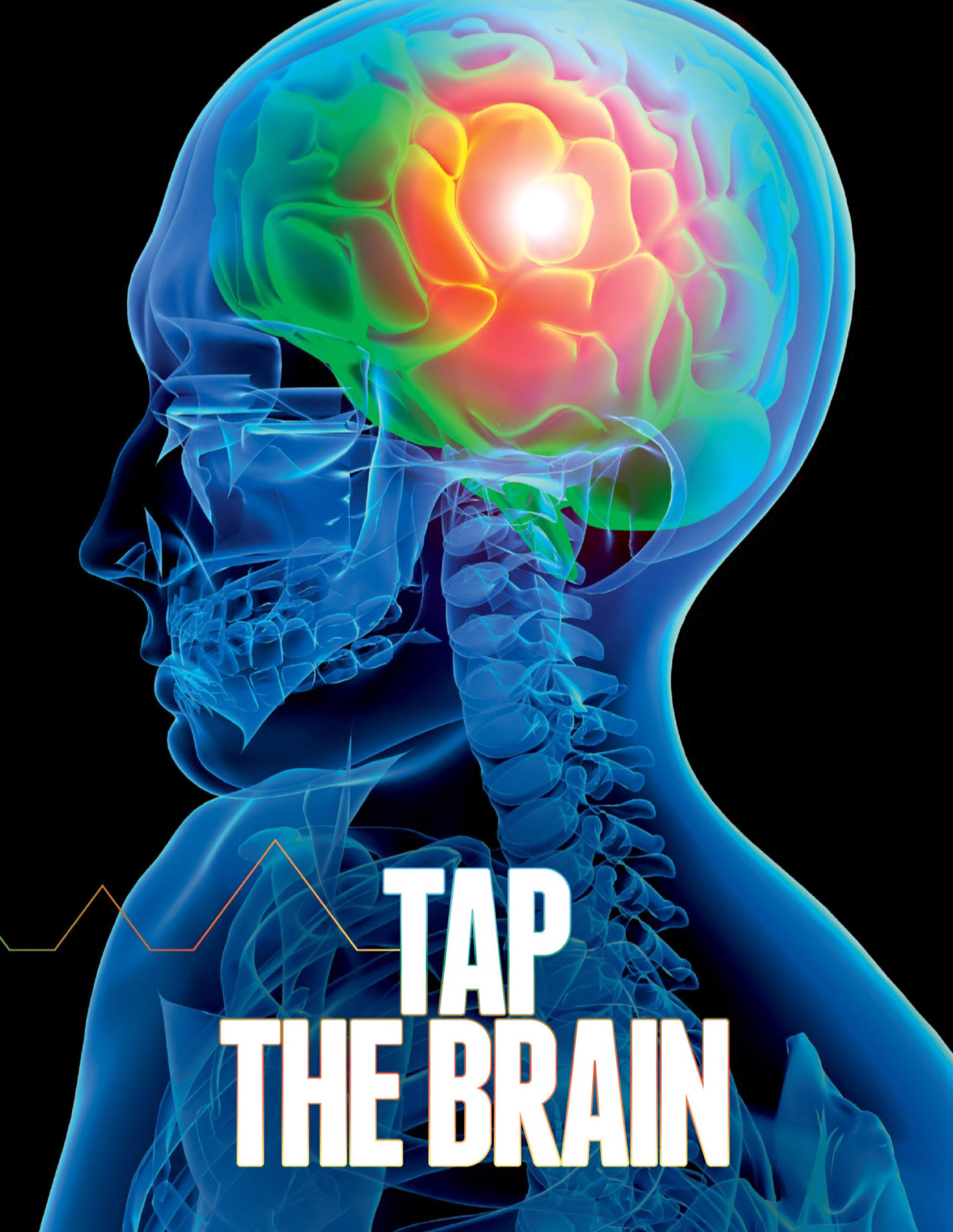
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ISSUE 092



**BOOST  
YOUR  
BRAIN  
POWER**





# TAP THE BRAIN



# HARRY DRESDEN IS ON THE HEIST FROM HELL

The unmissable  
**NEW DRESDEN  
FILES ADVENTURE**

from *Sunday*  
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The more we feel as though we've conquered nature, the more terrifying nature seems. Just as the original *Godzilla* ripped open post-

War Japan's nuclear trauma in 1954, Gareth Edwards' *Godzilla* enters a world where atomic-age fears are more closely entwined with natural disasters than ever.

Now, every tsunami, earthquake or flood casts a long shadow of man-made blame like global warming, ever more forceful exploitation of natural resources

and the constant debate surrounding nuclear energy. Newscasters and columnists furrow their brows and ask: "Did we do this? Did we make this all somehow worse?"

Into this world, *Godzilla* is a cautionary tale – an Aesop's Fable with three spiny ridges – that reminds us how high the price tag on progress can be and how fragile our world of technological miracles really is.

It's no accident that this issue also features a complete guide to Cybermen creators Gerry Davis and Kit Pedler's

deeply underrated BBC TV series *Doomwatch*, an unflinchingly bleak and paranoid precursor to *Fringe* in which progress always came with a price. Pedler passed away in 1981 and Davis in 1991, but they might have seen a kindred spirit in *Monsters* director Edwards.

*Godzilla* may have been born in the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but he's never seemed more relevant or more real.

*James*  
James Hoare  
Editor

## GET EXCITED ABOUT DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

That *Cloverfield* director Matt Reeves was the one to be building upon 2011's surprise hit was excitement enough, but now trailers and pictures are beginning to show an altogether darker world as human and ape are poised on the brink of war. With Gary Oldman and Kodi Smit-McPhee joining returning mo-cap master Andy Serkis, *Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes* could be the one that makes a franchise out of a return to form.



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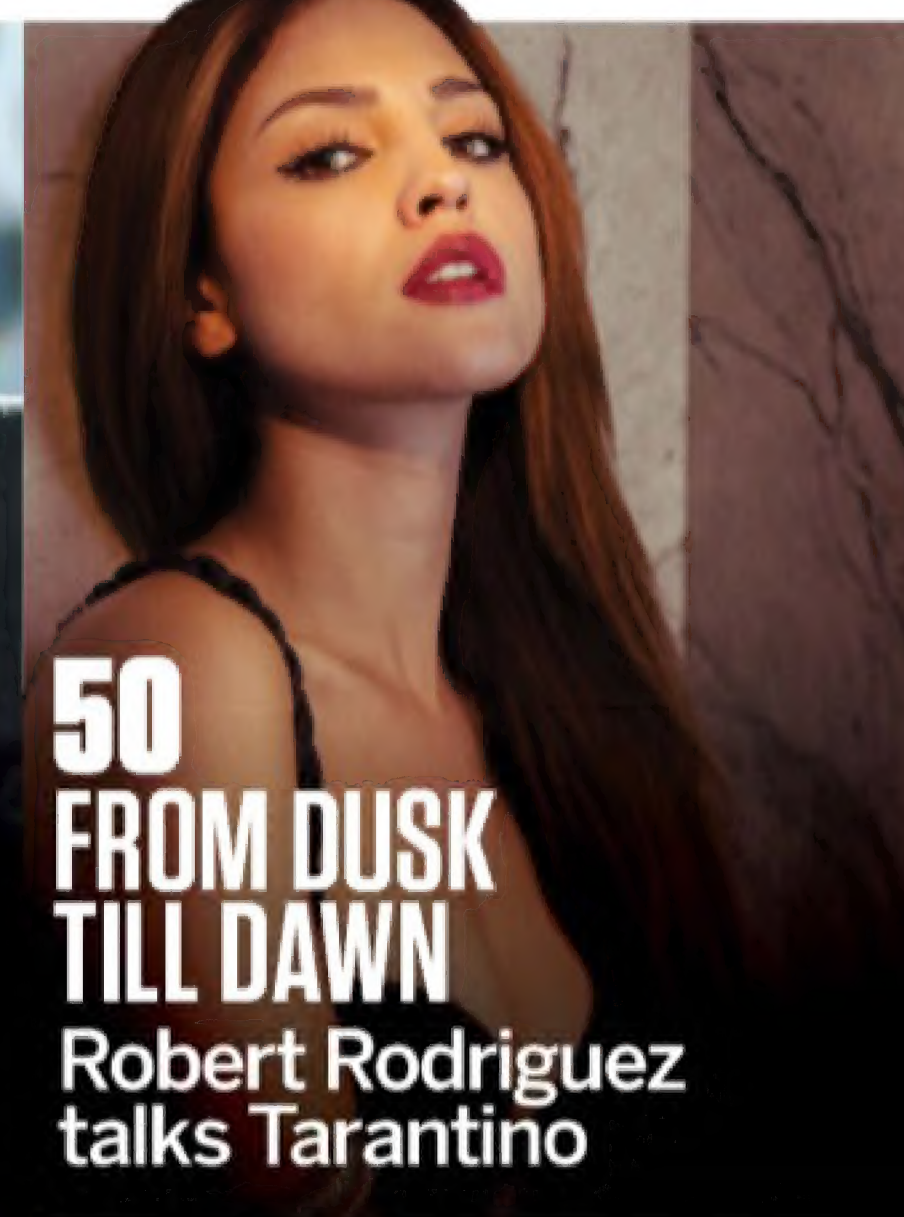
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## MEET THE TEAM

Q. What's your favourite movie monster?



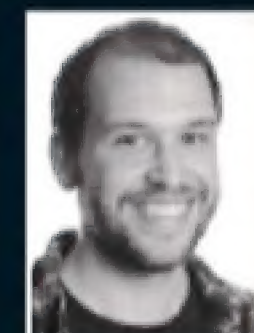
**James Hoare** Editor

**A. Swamp Thing (Swamp Thing)**  
Craven's take on DC's horror classic is silly fun.



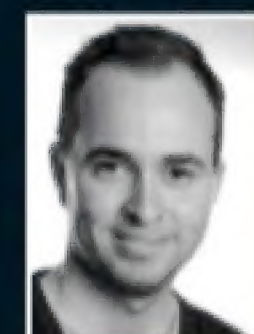
**Jodie Tyley** Deputy Editor

**A. Sulley (Monsters Inc)**  
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# PORTAL

Your essential, trustworthy and unrivalled guide to the latest genre happenings

NEWS

## RACCOON ON THE RUN

**"Guardians Of The Galaxy has nailed the tone of the comic-book," says writer Andy Lanning**

WORDS JODIE TYLEY  
INTERVIEWS JAMES HOARE

**W**atching a rabid raccoon blasting a gun from the branch of his walking, talking tree friend is one of the stand-out moments of the *Guardians Of The Galaxy* trailer, and we can already tell this duo will be the most bankable stars in the movie. It was one of comic-book writer Andy Lanning's favourite scenes, too: "They have really nailed the tone and feel of the comic-book," he says. "But seeing Rocket and Groot in action will never fail to make me whimper with joy!"

It was Lanning and Dan Abnett (also known as DnA) that rebooted the team in 2008, forming the line-up that's being used in James Gunn's movie. Notable arcs like *Annihilation: Conquest* and *War Of Kings* helped to reinvent this Seventies super-team as rogues and misfits, and the pair were invited to the set to discover what their work has helped create. On Twitter (@JamesGunn), the director was excited to have these godfathers of the Guardians on board: "We showed them around the production office today to show them some of the amazing stuff they inspired! We wouldn't be making this movie without them!"

Lanning was pleased to discover that potentially gimmicky characters like Rocket

and Groot were handled with respect. "James Gunn has done such a good job to define them, particularly Rocket. It actually unlocks more areas about them to explore," he reveals. "The Groot story I'm writing and Phil Jimenez is drawing for *Guardians Of The Galaxy* #100 delves into Groot's past and goes some way to explain why he left Planet X and why he and Rocket are buddies."

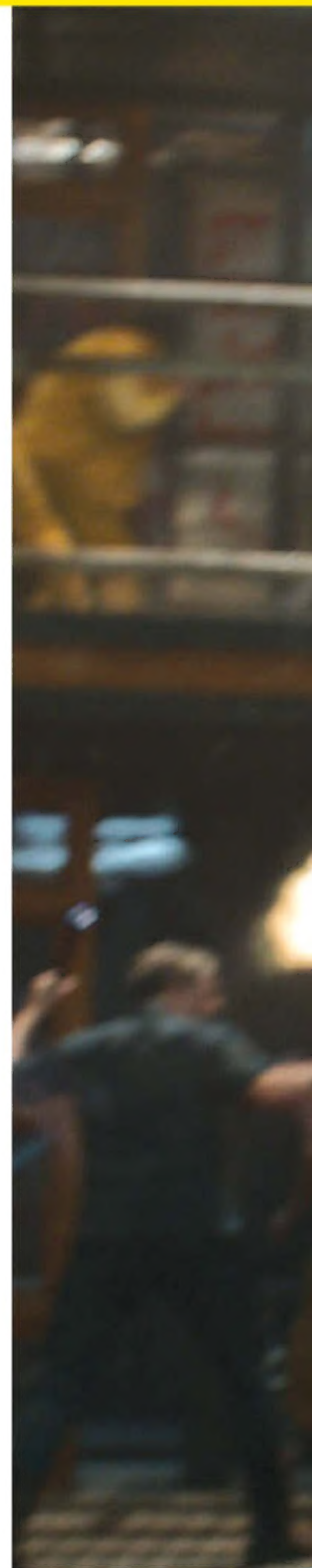
The furry felon will also star in a spin-off series. Written and drawn by Skottie Young, *Rocket Raccoon* will see him on the run with the authorities on his tail (along with the promise that puns will definitely be overused), on sale in July. But while this odd couple seems to be hogging the limelight, they're not the pilot of this spaceship. The story will hinge on Peter Quill, aka Star-Lord (Chris Pratt) and his discovery of a mysterious orb, which leads him to join forces with the cosmic misfits.

Over the years, this character has shifted from arrogant douche to have-a-go hero, and Lanning reveals the secret to making him a fan favourite no matter what: "We tried to keep him the right side of obnoxious, but still have him be a wise-cracking rogue. As the Earth man on the team, he is the audience's POV in a bizarre and strange universe, and we tried hard to make him likeable so the readers wanted to tag along with his story."

As for the upcoming movie, Lanning says it's remained faithful to the spirit of the comics: "James [Gunn] has been very generous to acknowledge that the film version of the team is inspired by our run on the comic. The film is the film and has to tell its own story, but the characters felt more like friends than distant cousins, because everyone went out of their way to be respectful to what we had established." Marvel is also planning to pay its respects to what DnA contributed to the universe by reprinting their run. The comics have long since been out of circulation, selling for as much as £50 per volume on eBay.

This series isn't the only one the pair has been praised for, having also made a fan favourite of *Nova*, which centred on Richard Rider, a member of the intergalactic police force known as the Nova Corps that is seen briefly in the *Guardians* trailer. Lanning would certainly love to see Richard Rider and his extended cast join the Marvel Cinematic Universe: "Having one film based on your work is a once-in-a-lifetime happening – having two would probably have me dancing like Snoopy on crack!"

*Guardians Of The Galaxy* will be released on 1 August, and *Guardians Of The Galaxy* by Abnett & Lanning: *The Complete Collection Volume 1* is out the same month.





## 008 HEROES REBORN



NBC save Heroes with a new cast of screen titans

## 010 THE FLASH



Grant Gustin reveals all on The CW's Arrow spin-off

## 016 GOTHAM



First word on the Fox's street-level Batman prequel



“SEEING ROCKET AND GROOT IN ACTION MAKES ME WHIMPER WITH JOY!”  
ANDY LANNING



SAVING THE DAY

# HEROES REBORN

WORDS JODIE TYLEY

The super-powered series is returning in 2015



NBC hasn't ruled out the return of original cast members.



**You can't keep** an indestructible cheerleader down – or the show she stars in. *Heroes* creator Tim Kring is bringing the show back for a 13-episode miniseries event, officially known as *Heroes Reborn*.

It's set to air in 2015, and will star a roster of all-new characters, although NBC says they "won't rule out the possibility of some of the show's original cast members popping back in." Fans will be formally introduced to these new super-powered beings in a digital series before the fifth season premieres.

"The enormous impact *Heroes* had on the television landscape when it

first launched in 2006 was eye-opening," says NBC Entertainment President Jennifer Salke. "Shows with that kind of resonance don't come around often, and we thought it was time for another instalment."

While *Heroes* was one of the frontrunners in superhero stories on TV, it fell out of favour towards the end of its four-year run. Since its cancellation in 2010, it appears that Kring has had plenty of time to plot his comeback, as Salke adds: "We look forward to all the new textures and layers Tim Kring plans to add to his original concept."

Given the biggest complaint was unresolved story arcs, we're holding out for a hero to bring us some closure.

*Heroes Reborn* will premiere on NBC in 2015.

HELLO GHOST

## THEY'RE HEEEEERE!

Jared Harris gets spooked in the *Poltergeist* 'reboot-quel'

INTERVIEW JAMES HOARE

**W**e've been promised another haunting from 'The Lost People' for years, but by Valentine's weekend 2015 they'll be here. Directed by *Monster House* helmer Gil Kenan and produced by Sam Raimi, it looks like a cross between a reboot, a remake and a sequel.

The script, written by David Lindsay-Abaire, who also worked with Raimi on *Oz: The Great And Powerful*, follows a familiar setup: "A family struggling to make ends meet relocates to an outdated suburban home and is confronted by an angry spirit who kidnaps their youngest daughter and challenges them to band together to rescue her from the clutches of evil."

It seems likely that Kenan is using the same approach as Fede Alvarez did for Raimi's *Evil Dead* 'reboot-quel' by setting it in the same universe. There's even rumours that the haunted house will contain some of

the Freeling family's possessions, including the infamous black-and-white TV set, connecting this bunch of new characters to the original.

One of the new additions is Jared Harris as psychic Carrigan Burke: "He's a sort of TV personality who gets roped in to help this family," the actor reveals. "There's a slight feeling that because he appears on TV, he's full of shit." The tormented family will be headed up by *Iron Man 2*'s Sam Rockwell and *Mad Men*'s Rosemarie DeWitt, playing mother and father to three children.

Harris thinks this new line-up will be more than a match for the original classic: "The kids are really good, particularly Kennedy [Clements] whose playing the youngest, Maddie. She's really just a real object lesson in being pleasant. She really was a great, wonderful surprise."

*Poltergeist* will be released on 13 February 2015.



*Poltergeist*'s Jared Harris also stars in Hammer horror *The Quiet Ones*.



## FIVE THINGS WITH

## RHONA MITRA

How the *SGU* and *Underworld* star became humanity's last hope INTERVIEW STEVE NASH

**1 Rocking the boat**

On board the Michael Bay-produced post-apocalyptic series *The Last Ship*, Rhona Mitra stars as a Dr Scott, a scientist specialising in viruses just as one wipes out mankind. She's not too keen on sharing that devastating news, though: "She can't tell anyone that she knows that their mothers, their children, their babies are all dying," she reveals. "After everything is out, we have to work out a way of me not being the albatross on the ship, me actually being more of the saving grace, because there's no one else."

**2 Brit on board**

You could be forgiven for thinking Dr Scott is the villain of the series since she's the only English crewmember alongside all-American stars like Adam Baldwin (*Chuck*) and Eric Dane (*Grey's Anatomy*). "They liked the contrast of the cultures on the ship," the Brit-born actress explains. "There are a lot of English accents on TV right now. There didn't used to be so much. It used to be more of a requirement. 'Can you do American, because it's easier for our audiences to relate to you?'"

**3 Plain sailing**

The series was originally filmed on an actual US Navy ship so the cast could find their sea legs. "You feel the hum of her and the ocean and what that power of the missiles is like," she says. "There are all these five-inch guns, and everywhere you look there is another missile, so there is a lot of testosterone on that ship. But the ship is very much a female force. I call her 'the Mothership.'"

**4 Pushing the boat out**

Their mission is to find a cure, stop the virus and save the world. "Saving the human race," Mitra cuts in. "I have made a point in correcting that. There were even lines like, 'We have to save the world!' And I said, 'No, we're not. When we are all gone, the world is going to be fine. We need to save the humans.' It's lovely that it happens to be a female that's at the helm of the cerebral part of this, the scientific aspect of it."

**5 Going overboard**

*The Last Ship* is the latest in a long line of TV and film projects that bring humanity to the brink. "I think it's because we are dancing on the precipice of that right now," she says. "The viruses and bacteria that we have no control over, that is the zombie apocalypse. We are in an interesting time where a lot of malaises are coming about, and I think it's just figuring out what is going to be the one that is going to take out the most in the quickest and swiftest amount of time."

*The Last Ship* will air in the US in June.

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HE'LL SAVE EVERY ONE OF US

# FIRST LOOK AT THE CRIMSON COMET!

You've seen him in *Arrow*, but Grant Gustin's Flash is now suited and booted ahead of his new series INTERVIEW STEVE NASH

**When you first got approached to play such an iconic comic-book character, were there any doubts in your mind about it?**

Deep down I'm like, 'Fuck yeah!' but at the same time I couldn't believe I was even getting the opportunity to audition for it. I am a lanky, 23-year-old actor, and the creative team saw something in me that they thought was innately the character, and they got me really excited about it and made me believe I could do it as well. With something like this, where there is already all the information out there for the character – he's been around for decades – everyone is going to have an opinion about who should be playing it. For the most part I just don't listen to that.

**Do you read stuff like that on the internet?**

I try not to care about what people say online for my own emotional stability, but yeah, you look. I would probably be looking anyway, even if it wasn't me playing the role, checking out what's going on with the guy that's playing the Flash, so I get it.

**Why do you think characters like the Flash have struggled to get the same sort of attention as Batman or Superman?**

I think the Flash has had some success longevity-wise. It's just that Superman is the world's hero, and Batman is

**FASTEST MEN ALIVE**  
The speediest superheroes  
in the DC Universe



just so badass and cool. Hopefully, this is going to change that, because I think Flash is equally as cool. With the creative team that we have and the *Arrow* platform, we have the opportunity to make the Flash as cool as it has ever been.

**Is there any hope for the Felicity/Barry fans who were excited by their obvious chemistry in *Arrow*?**

I hope so, we had a lot of fun playing all those scenes. I don't know what the future is of that. I hope so.

**Are you going to have to do a lot of stunts?**

It's going to be very different from what [*Arrow* star] Stephen [Amell] has to do. They are doing some cool new things with technology, and that's going to be how we do a lot of the stunts with the Flash. I can't really say too much. It's just going to be new and exciting technologies being used.

**If you could have a superhero power, what would it be?**

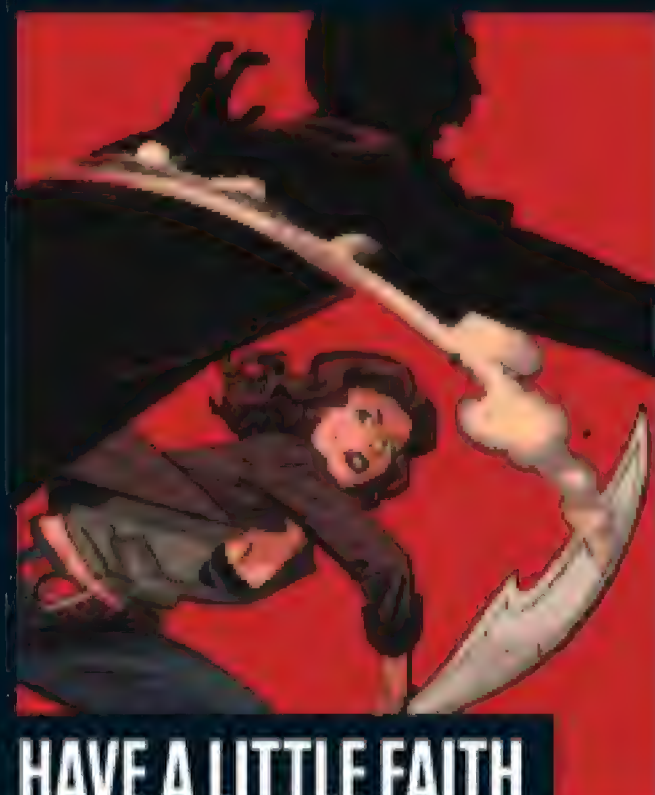
I have always said that if I had a superhero skill, it would be to heal, like anybody or anything. Flying would be cool, though. I have always wanted to fly. Maybe one day.

*The Flash* will air later this year in the US on the CW network.



## STAND-UP COMICS

The new series you'll be reading next



### HAVE A LITTLE FAITH

The tall, brooding hunk of forehead and his companion are back to help the helpless. London has been flooded with magic and Angel is dealing with the fallout, as Faith continues her journey of self-discovery, slaying zompires alongside Buffy. It's penned by Victor Gischler, who wrote the *Spike: A Dark Place* miniseries that tied into *Buffy* Season Nine, with art by Will Conrad, who worked on the *Buffy* tie-in series. Original writer Christos Gage hasn't gone far, though; he's writing *Buffy* Season Ten.

*Angel & Faith* Season Ten is out now.



### THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW

Matt Smith's era has come to an end, but his adventures in time and space continue in Titan Comics' new series. That's series, plural. Instead of releasing one line featuring one Time Lord, there will be two ongoing monthly titles: *The Tenth Doctor* by Nick Abadzis and Elena Casagrande, and *The Eleventh Doctor* by Al Ewing, Rob Williams and Simon Fraser. While plot details are as scarce as those in the television series ("Spoilers, sweetie!"), these gorgeous covers set expectations pretty high.

Both *Doctor Who* series will be released on 23 July.



HOT NEWS  
Witches Of East End



HUNTING FOR WITCHES

# SOMETHING WICKED THIS AWAY COMES

WORDS JODIE TYLEY  
INTERVIEW ABIGAIL CHANDLER

**Twin Peaks' Mädchen Amick on why we've fallen under *Witches Of East End*'s spell**

While other witchy TV series like *Eastwick* and *The Secret Circle* have disappeared quicker than you can shout "I'm melting!" *Witches Of East End* is riding its broomstick into a second season. Based on the book by Melissa de la Cruz, this supernatural brew follows a family of witches struggling against dark forces.

Star Mädchen Amick thinks she knows the secret to their bewitching success: "We're having fun with the magic and drama and being a thriller, and people can really relate to the characters," she tells us. "Yes, we're witches, but there's an

aunt, a mum and two girls who are trying to figure out who they are and what they're doing with their lives. And then you throw this magic cloak on top of the whole story; it just makes it a lot of fun."

*Twin Peaks* fans will recognise Amick as fan-favourite character, waitress Shelly Johnson. In *Witches Of East End* she stars as the rebellious Aunt Wendy and her alter-ego, a black cat, which she also Tweets as @auntwendythecat. And be warned: these shapeshifting scenes may contain nudity. "It's kept me working out the whole time!" she says. "Apparently you're not supposed to show the whole

butt crack on Lifetime, but it made it through. It was that good!"

Far from gratuitous, the show actually delivers a positive message of female empowerment, according to Amick: "Witchcraft was created to hold women down whenever they were trying to stand up for themselves. We embrace that and create four strong women that don't need men. We can use them and have fun with them once in a while, but we don't need them to survive."

*Witches Of East End* Season Two will air on Lifetime in April.



Twin Peaks' Mädchen Amick leads the cast of *Witches Of East End*.





## BACK FROM THE BRINK

We take a closer look at the Transformers trailer

### ROBOTS IN DISGUISE

This is the first time that we've seen Optimus Prime in his original alt form, and it's because the Transformers have had to go into hiding. Governments want them off Earth after the events of *Dark Of The Moon*.

### MAN-MADE VS REAL DEAL

Mankind is fighting back by using parts of captured transformers to build their own. This is the prototype Stinger, squaring up to take down Bumblebee. Actor Stanley Tucci is playing the scientist behind these man-made robots.

### BEWARE THE BOUNTY HUNTER

Lockdown is a rogue Transformer turned bounty hunter who, in the animated series, captures Autobots in return for upgrades. In the movie he has an anti-gravity ship and can turn his face into a big gun.

### HEROES OR VILLAINS?

We get our first appearance of the dinobots, including Grimlock and two-headed pteranodon Strafe. These prehistoric beasts have always been anti-heroes, but it looks as if Bumblebee is hitching a ride from Strafe.

*Transformers: Age Of Extinction* will be released on 10 July.

## LAST ORDERS

# STAKING POINT

WORDS JODIE TYLEY

**True Blood Season Seven will see the death of fan favourites**

**T** rue Blood's Season Six finale left us crying "Snow way!" as Eric (Alexander Skarsgård) was left sunbathing, absolutely starkers and catching fire. Truebies are being warned to expect the death of some of their best-loved characters, as Ryan Kwanten, who plays Sookie's sex-mad sibling Jason, told *Access Hollywood*: "We're leaving nothing to chance. People are going to be dying. Some of your favourites are going to be not lasting the season, unfortunately."

The threat this time is the Hep V-infected vampires that were glimpsed in the finale.

Showrunner Brian Buckner has since given an insight into what this new breed of nefarious nightwalkers are like: "They have to drink human blood in larger quantities and more frequently than before," he told *Screenrant*. "But they're not going to be zombies. They're far more organised and haven't lost their mental capacity."

But the bloodsuckers in Bon Temps have never had it so good after mayor Sam (Sam Trammell) suggests monogamous feeding relationships in exchange for protection. It's all part of showrunner Brian Buckner's plan to get back to the program's roots. In an

interview with *TV Line*, he said: "The show started out as, 'Let's see if vampires and humans can get along'. We're returning to that original premise of the show."

*True Blood* Season Six will be released on 2 June. Season Seven will air later this year.



Sookie's story will conclude in the seventh and final season of *True Blood*.

## COULD THIS BE TRUE BLOOD'S REPLACEMENT?



With a space for the supernatural in HBO's schedule, they might want to pick

up Charlene Harris' latest series, a darker world in a dried-up western town called *Midnight in Texas*.

"There aren't many inhabitants there, and they're all there for a particular reason," she tells us. "And there'll be characters from all the series I've written in these three books. It won't be as supernatural as the Sookie books, but there are supernatural elements."

Don't expect to see Bill stopping by for a bottle of O-Neg, though: "There's only one vampire and he's pretty unusual... I'm not going to retread any of those vampires."

*Midnight Crossroad* will be out on 8 May via Gollancz.





EVERYTHING  
YOU NEED  
TO KNOW  
ABOUT...

HOT NEWS  
The Sandman

# SANDMAN

Neil Gaiman's *Dream* becomes a reality as a movie adaptation gets underway

## WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Neil Gaiman began the *Sandman* series in 1989. With over 75 issues and numerous spin-offs, its creator sums it up for us in one line: "The Lord of Dreams learns that one must change or die, and makes his decision." While this synopsis leaves out huge chunks of mythology about the adventures of the Endless – the seven siblings that have existed since the dawn of time – it's the kind of no-nonsense approach the filmmakers will have to adopt when wrestling it into a movie narrative.

## IT WILL BE TRICKY TO PULL OFF

This project has been talked about for years, and came close to being a TV series at one point. Gaiman said it was his preferred format: "The problem you have with a *Sandman* movie is that the first thing you're doing is deciding what to throw away," he told us in 2011. "Given the choice between a movie or a TV series, I would definitely want a TV series just because you can build the story pretty much the same way I did in the comic. In a movie you have to get in there fast, hit it fast and stay in fast."

## WHO WANTED A PIECE OF THE ACTION?

There have been plenty of names attached, including *Superman Returns* producer Jon Peters and *Pulp Fiction* co-writer Roger Avary. *Kick-Ass*' Matthew Vaughn also threw his name into the ring when he told *Comic Book Resources*: "I would love to do *Sandman*. It could be like *The Lord Of The Rings* – just a huge movie." More recently, *Supernatural* creator Eric Kripke attempted to win over Warner Bros execs. Gaiman said he was "nice and smart, but just didn't quite convince us all."

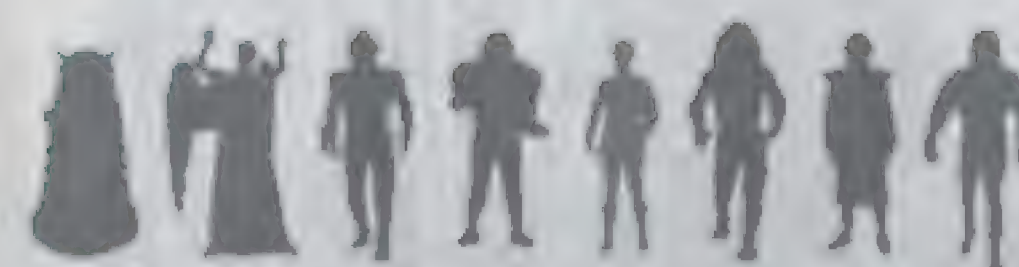
## THE MASTERMINDS BEHIND THE PROJECT

*The Fades* and *How I Live Now* writer Jack Thorne is penning the script, based on a pitch by *Man Of Steel* co-writer David Goyer, who also worked on the *Dark Knight* trilogy. He will be reunited with *The Dark Knight Rises* actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt, who is producing alongside Goyer and may even have a starring role and take on directing duties, though this is yet to be confirmed. It wouldn't be surprising, since he made his directorial debut with the Sundance success *Don Jon*. This won't be the first film based on a graphic novel that Gordon-Levitt appears in, as he will star in *Sin City: A Dame To Kill For*.



## EIGHT THRILLING ADVENTURES

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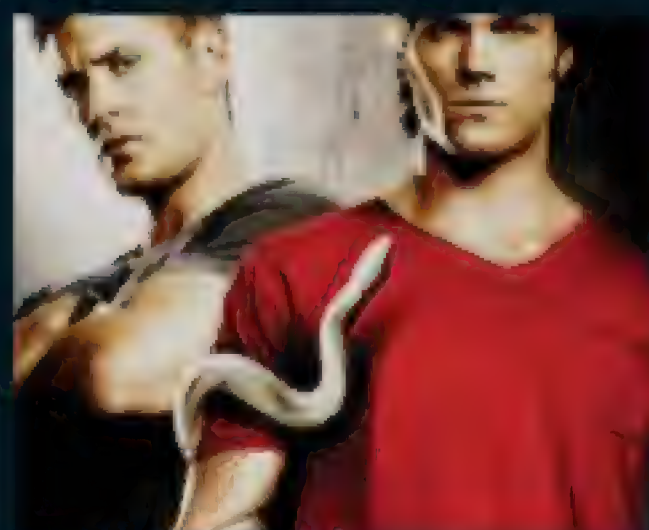
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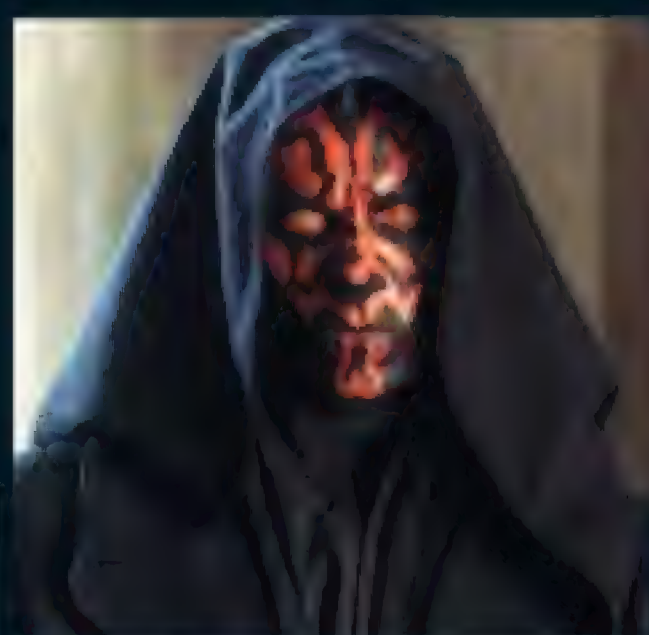
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Peirce says she would welcome the  
chance to work in the horror genre again.

BACK TO BASICS

# BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

Carrie's Kimberly Peirce on remakes and glass ceilings WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**W**hen the remake of *Carrie* was announced, scepticism was high – until, that is, *Boys Don't Cry* director Kimberly Peirce was announced as the director. She was the perfect choice for a tale of high-school outsiders and shocking trauma, as well as a huge fan of the book and the original.

"I loved *Carrie* when I was younger," explains Peirce. "But to re-read it and fall so thoroughly in love with it and feel a relationship to it that felt different, that stirred my curiosity. There were a number of things that I thought, 'Oh, I can do something really specific here.' The first big thing to me was the mother/daughter relationship. I tried to dimensionalise – as much as I could – all the other relationships. The other thing was I saw it as a superhero origin story, and that was thrilling to me"

Not only was Peirce an inspired choice; she was a depressingly unusual one. The issue of the glass ceiling for female directors in Hollywood has warranted much discussion recently, and Peirce

tells us that it's still in place. "Oh, there definitely is, and that's something that I wouldn't have said after *Boys Don't Cry*, but then I made it in a system that tends to be very egalitarian; the independent film world. There's absolutely a glass ceiling. The numbers shift, but I think about five per cent of all working directors are women. People have written that the

need to hire women more, I also want to publicise the fact that women are doing a great job when given the chance. So we have to change it. I'm lucky I made three – statistically that doesn't happen – but you fight to make each one."

Not only was the decision to hire Peirce popular with the critics, it also made an impact on moviegoers. "*Carrie* made money," Peirce tells us, "and it's funny, because I don't really care about money, but it becomes a bragging right when I can say 'Look, I made a bigger movie, it made a profit.'"

Peirce says she would revisit the genre. "I loved it," she enthuses. "I thought it was really fun, horror is a cousin to drama and tragedy. There's a level of amplification, humour and excess. Horror is like pornography; you're trying to get the audience off, and you want to touch them, affect them and push the boundaries. I'd love to do more in the genre."

*Carrie* is out on DVD and Blu-ray from 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment.

**"I LOVED CARRIE WHEN I WAS YOUNGER – KIMBERLY PEIRCE"**

director from *Frozen* [Jennifer Lee] and myself are the only ones that made movies of a certain scale, I don't know exactly, but that's a heartbreak. There is a limitation on women being hired.

"I think the heartbreak is there's so much talent, and the truth is that when women make movies, often they're critically acclaimed and they make money," she continues. "So while I want to publicise the fact that there aren't enough women working and people



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Uncanny Comics issue 1 shattered the status quo with all the brute strength of Superboy Prime punching the walls of reality, but issue 2 is an altogether more fleet-footed beast, as we talk to DC Comics superstar writer and chief creative officer Geoff Johns about the Flash and untangle the DC event that rebooted the whole damn universe with *Flashpoint*.

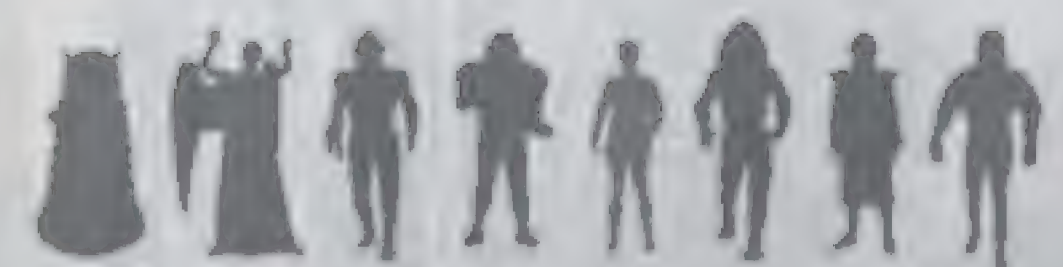
Also inside Uncanny Comics issue 2 is a tribute to the late, great father of Marvel's Sixties revolution, artist and visionary Jack Kirby; an interview with *Green Arrow* and *John Sable Freelance* creator Mike Grell; a beginner's guide to the Fantastic Four's unpredictable ally, occasional enemy and warrior-king of the eerie Inhumans, Black Bolt, and a guide to the best old and new digital comics that you absolutely must read right now!

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EIGHT  
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# CRISIS ON INFINITE NETWORKS

4 classic comic-books soon to be seen on the small screen

WORDS JODIE TYLEY



## 1. GOTHAM The on-screen origins of Commissioner James Gordon and classic Batman villains

**What started out** as a TV series about the untold origins of Commissioner James Gordon has expanded to include Bruce Wayne and all the villains that put Gotham City on the map. In the starring role is *The OC* and *Southland*'s Ben McKenzie as the rookie detective who will eventually rise through the ranks and become the unlikely ally of the Caped Crusader.

"This is an origin story," says Kevin Reilly, president of the Fox network. "This is all of the classic Batman characters, with a young Bruce Wayne, with Detective Gordon before he's Commissioner Gordon, with the Penguin, with the Riddler, and with the Joker. All of those characters are going to arc and become who they are."

The *Dark Knight* trilogy star Gary Oldman imparted some wisdom for his successor: "Go back to the comic-books," he tells *Access Hollywood*. "That's what I did... There's great stuff about Gordon. He had a whole other life." And it seems that actor Ben McKenzie has taken his advice, tweeting a picture of a stack of *Gotham Central* graphic novels with the message: "Got some reading to do. #gotham."



In the new series, Gordon is paired with "brash but shrewd" police legend Harvey Bullock (*Sons Of Anarchy*'s Donal Logue). The two will be charged with investigating the city's highest-profile case: the murder of local billionaires Thomas and Martha Wayne. It's at the scene of the crime that Gordon meets their 12-year-old son, Bruce (*Touch*'s David Mazouz).

**Creators**  
Bruno Heller  
**Cast** Ben McKenzie, Sean Pertwee, Robin Lord Taylor, Erin Taylor  
**Coming** Late 2014  
**Network** FOX

"I've read the script and it's really good," Reilly continues.

"It's going to be this operatic soap that has a slightly larger-than-life quality. And we will arc a young Bruce

Wayne from a child into the final episode of the series, when he will put

on the cape." Sounds like this DC Comics icon will be getting the *Smallville* treatment, with the series also charting the rise of the renowned rogues, including a teenaged Selina Kyle pre-claws and whiskers, and Oswald Cobblepot/the Penguin.

Additionally, unswervingly loyal butler Alfred (Sean Pertwee) will play a crucial role in moulding the young boy's destiny, as Reilly adds: "We will see how they get to become who they are as Gotham is teetering on the edge." This revealing look at some of comics' best-loved characters arrives ahead of Zack Snyder's *Batman Vs Superman*, where the Bat-signal will be shining on the big screen in 2015.

*Gotham Central* is available to read now on Comixology.

## VILLAINS WE WANT TO SEE IN GOTHAM

### HARLEY QUINN

The Bat-movies have overlooked the Joker's devoted sidekick, but this would be the perfect excuse to adapt Paul Dini and Bruce Timm's *The Batman Adventures: Mad Love*. In the 1994 graphic novella, she's a psychiatrist who falls in love with the Arkham Asylum prisoner after he tells her all about his troubled childhood.

### THE GENERAL

As a bored adolescent, Ulysses Hadrian Armstrong burned his military school to the ground, along with everyone inside. In *Gotham City*, he recruits gang members to form his very own 'army' and attempts to storm the police station in a bid to steal guns and illegal drugs.

### POISON IVY

The infamous eco-terrorist gained a new origin in the New 52 that would suit the TV series' crime thriller vibe. As an intern at Wayne Enterprises' Bio-Chem division, she's fired after proposing they develop substances that have the power to brainwash people. When she accidentally spills chemicals on herself, she gains immunity to all poisons.

### VICTOR ZSASZ

After gambling and losing everything he owned to the Penguin, he was going to commit suicide before a homeless man attacked him with a knife. Victor turned the weapon on him instead as a 'gift' for saving his life and dedicated his life to 'liberating' others from a futile existence. He carves a notch into his skin for every life taken.



Gary Oldman has advised *Gotham*'s Ben McKenzie to "go back to the comics."





## 2. IZOMBIE

Actress **Rose McIver** is trading pixie dust for brains in *iZombie*. She's starring as Olivia 'Liv' Moore, a "med student-turned-zombie who takes a job in the coroner's office to gain access to the brains she must reluctantly eat to maintain her humanity," according to The CW's synopsis.

Based on the DC Vertigo comics by Chris Roberson and Michael Allred, the pilot for this potential new series is being developed by *Veronica Mars*' Rob Thomas and Diane Ruggiero. While we're on the subject, The CW has announced plans for a spin-off starring Kristen Bell's titular detective.

**Once Upon A Time's Tinker Bell wants to eat your brains**

*iZombie* also involves detective work, with lead character Liv inheriting each corpse's memories after chomping on their brain. With the help of her medical examiner boss and a police detective, she begins solving murders in an attempt to hush the voices in her head. This corpse should be fresh enough for fans of *The Walking Dead* to get stuck into, with the addition of a cool indie vibe that gives the crime/zombie drama unlife all of its own.

*iZombie* is available to read now on Comixology.

**Creators**  
Rob Thomas, Diane Ruggiero

**Cast** Rose McIver, Robert Buckley, Malcolm Goodwin, Alexandra Krosney

**Coming** Late 2014  
**Network** The CW

## 3. CONSTANTINE

**Man Of Steel's David S Goyer dabbles in the occult in new TV series**

*Criminal Minds* star Matt Ryan will be low-life mystic John Constantine, described by the network as "an enigmatic and irreverent con man-turned-reluctant supernatural detective who is thrust into the role of defending us against dark forces from beyond." It's been confirmed that he's going blonde for the role (Keanu Reeves famously didn't for 2005's *Constantine*, much to the distress of fanboys/girls), and Welsh actor Ryan certainly has the rugged intensity for the role.

The project is helmed by *The Mentalist*'s Daniel Cerone and *Man Of Steel*'s David S Goyer, who revealed that they're prepared to draw on a whole world of supernatural characters from the DC universe, and not just the *Hellblazer* comic-book's traditional supporting characters already cast – JC's best mate Chas and Voodoo villain Papa Midnite.

"I think we would try to bring in some of the other occult figures,"



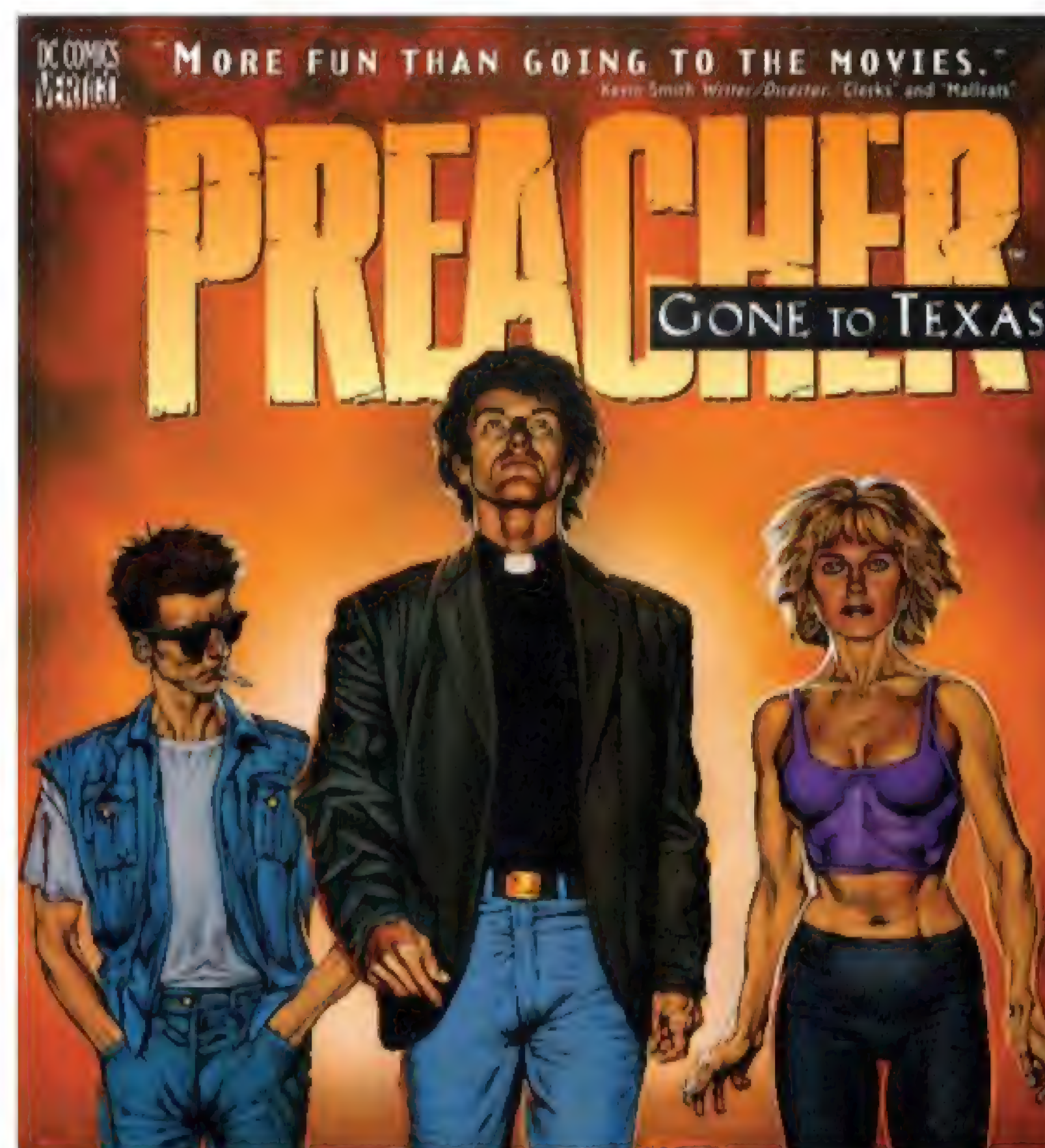
**Creators**  
David S Goyer, Daniel Cerone

**Cast** Matt Ryan, Harold Perrineau, Lucy Griffiths, Charles Halford

**Coming** Late 2014  
**Network** NBC

Goyer told *I Am Rogue* when asked if they were planning to go down the *Arrow* route. As the chief screenwriter of DC's feature film universe, he will be trying to replicate that success on the small screen.

*Constantine* is currently ongoing from DC Comics, both that and the original, long-running *Hellblazer* series are available digitally via Comixology.



## 4. PREACHER

**This Is The End's writers adapt the much-loved blasphemous comic**

**The 75-issue series** by Gareth Ennis and Steve Dillon has been stuck in development hell for years, which is rather fitting for a story about a Southern minister who tries to track down God after learning of His abandonment of Heaven.

Tasked with bringing this debauched story of angels, vampires and hillbillies to life are Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg. While eyebrows were raised at this decision, anyone who's seen the hilarious apocalyptic

filth of *This Is The End* will be able to detect the influence of Ennis and Dillon on this writing duo.

Goldberg reassured *Collider* that they're just as passionate about *Preacher* as we are: "Everyone else tried to make it a movie and it's too big. You've got to learn the characters, it's all about a love triangle and you need to grow with them and see the woman swayed one way or the other. In a movie, you just can't accomplish all that."

You can read *Preacher* now on Comixology.

**Creators**  
Seth Rogen, Evan Goldberg  
**Cast** TBC  
**Coming** TBC  
**Network** AMC

YOU'RE GOING TO  
NEED A BIGGER SOFA...





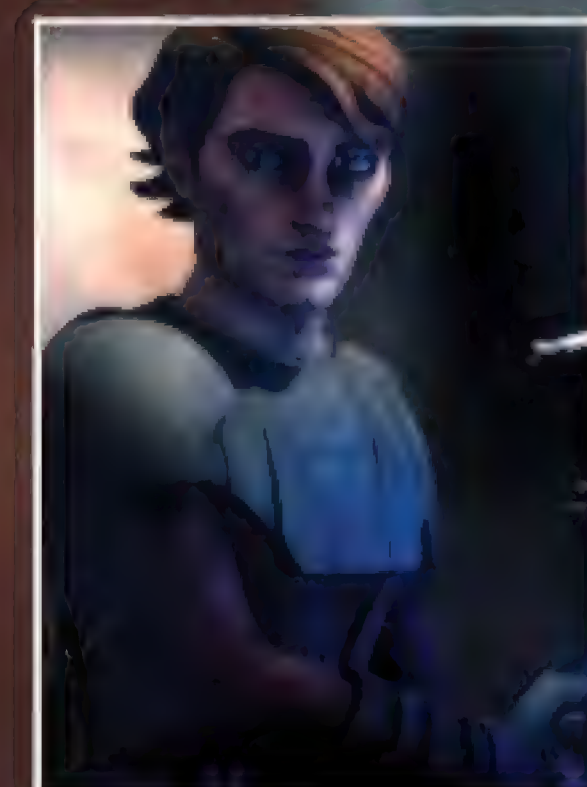
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# MATT LANTER

**82**  
TOTAL GEEK  
RATING

Lanter voiced Anakin Skywalker  
in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.



## GEEK CRED

⚙️ Matt Lanter, the voice of Anakin Skywalker in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, went full-force at his wedding and invited a bunch of Clone Troopers to the ceremony. "They lined the path when we were introduced as husband and wife, and we walked between them," he says. "I can't believe my wife let me do that, but she even made a *Star Wars* reference in her vow to me – that's when I knew I had her! She said something like, 'I'm the Padme to your Anakin.'"

20/20

## GEEK KNOWLEDGE

⚙️ *The Clone Wars* was cancelled before Lanter was able to complete his character's transition into cinema's most infamous villain. "I would have loved to play Darth Vader," he admits, "but at the same time that's been done and we weren't a remake of anything; we were adding to it. We were the connective tissue between *Attack Of The Clones* and *Revenge Of The Sith*." But he'd be back for a cameo in *Rebels* in a heartbeat: "If Dave [Filoni] calls, I'm picking up!"

15/20

## COMMITMENT

⚙️ Lanter's gone from *Star Wars* to *Star Crossed*, where he appears as Roman, an alien teen integrated into high school alongside humans. He has also lent his vocals to *Ultimate Spider-Man* as Harry Osborn and *Venom*, but these roles have let him get off lightly in terms of suffering for his art. "The most uncomfortable I've been was on [the spoof film] *Disaster Movie*," he says. "I had to wear heavy dreadlocks in hot Louisiana. The hair stuck to my back – urch!"

10/20

## FAN POWER

⚙️ The greatest gift Lanter has ever received from a fan was a custom-made lightsaber. "They had a machine shop and they built Anakin's lightsaber out of metal parts," he explains. "It's very heavy with real rubber grips and a fake gemstone where the 'saber would ignite. It's one of my most prized possessions." As a self-confessed fan of the franchise, he's campaigning for a part in *Episode VII*: "I'd love to be a part of it, but if I'm not I'll be the first in line for a ticket."

18/20

## COSPLAY

⚙️ In *Star Crossed*, Lanter has a few tattoo-style markings that give his true identity away. But if he were to cosplay for fun, he'd go to town on the costume: "If it could be done properly, then dressing up as an Avatar would be amazing," he says. "But I would want to do the stilts and everything – I'd want to be nine-feet tall. Or maybe I'd be RoboCop, all in armour – or Batman! I'd like to be a character with a really cool armoured suit."

19/20



# THE MONSTER COLLECTION



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# UNNATURAL DISASTERS



**AFTER 60 YEARS AND NEARLY 40 FILMS, THE ULTIMATE MONSTER IS BACK. WITH A CAST OF INDIE HEAVYWEIGHTS AND AN OUTSIDER EDGE COURTESY OF MONSTERS DIRECTOR GARETH EDWARDS, GODZILLA IS BIGGER THAN EVER. EDWARDS AND STARS BRYAN CRANSTON, AARON TAYLOR-JOHNSON AND ELIZABETH OLSEN PAY HOMAGE TO THE KING OF THE MONSTERS...**

WORDS JAMES HOARE

**O**n 3 November 1954, a fin broke the water somewhere off Odo Island, and 20,000 tons of hell followed with it.

Released less than a decade after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that brought World War II to a halt, Ishiro Honda's *Godzilla* dredged scaly nuclear terror up from the Ocean and gave a wounded society something they could fight – a reptilian Nagasaki they could fire missiles at and construct scientific solutions to. Mankind could triumph over death, and the

power of the atom could be held up for the nightmare that it was, and arguably still is.

60 years later, a larger fin and a heavier weight will emerge from the depths courtesy of *Monsters* director Gareth Edwards. Despite the powerful emotional sting left by the opening scenes of Bryan Cranston breaking down in a nuclear facility, *Godzilla* has a wider target than exorcising one nation's specific nuclear trauma.

"Our film is not based on anything to do with Fukushima," asserts the director firmly. "It's [set] in a fictional city outside of Tokyo and happens 15 years ago, but that

said, it does deal with the genuine problem of around the world, we have these nuclear power plants and we benefit from it.

"It's an amazing thing, but when it goes wrong it really does go wrong in a big way, and I guess our film is about having this nuclear Pandora's box that we opened a long time ago, and we still police the world about – you can't have it, you can have it. The 'what if?' of this film is 'what if creatures existed that needed to feed on this stuff', so having it become a really bad thing rather than a good thing, that it's considered a bad thing." ➤



"AS THE HUMAN RACE WE  
DO ABUSE OUR POSITION  
A LOT, AND HAVE NEVER  
REALLY FACED THE  
CONSEQUENCES"

GARETH EDWARDS

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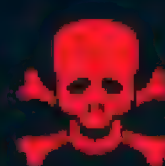


## KNOW THE MONSTER



IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

## Gareth Edwards reveals the secrets behind the Godzilla redesign



## GODZILLA IS BIG

"The idea is to make him as big as you possibly can," explains Edwards. "He's technically 350 feet in the film. The way we arrived at that was we wanted him to be tall enough for you to see him wherever you were in a city, for argument's sake, but small enough so that he can be obscured sometimes, or else there's no fun in those scenes. It technically will make him the biggest Godzilla there's ever been."



## GODZILLA IS LOUD

"He's a bit of a genius," says Edwards of sound editor Erik Aadahl. "He did *Transformers* with Michael Bay and *The Tree Of Life* with Terrence Malick, so his range is fantastic. It's what we were aspiring to with this, which is obviously a massive, epic movie, but we wanted the heart, soul and subtlety. We wanted to embrace the original classic roar, but obviously do it like Dolby 7.1 or Atmos [surround sound], and the original recording we asked Toho to send over just doesn't do justice to the cinema experience today, so we had to kind of reinvent it."



## GODZILLA IS JUST RIGHT

"Weta [Workshop] in New Zealand didn't do the visual effects, but the design," says Edwards. "It mainly boiled down to me and an artist called Andrew Baker, who worked in 3D. I was in London and he was in New Zealand, he'd open up via Skype and I'd share his desktop. For me, it would be like 4am, and for hours we'd chat and he would rotate the model and just paint, push and pull shapes, and rotate it, and push and pull. We kept just pushing and pulling until one day we rotated it all the way round and went, 'Don't change anything – I think we've got it.' It took weeks and weeks of long nights, and that was our process."



➔ Cranston's nuclear physicist-turned-doomsayer Joseph Brody experiences the 'bad thing' well ahead of the rest of us when his wife Sandra (Juliette Binoche) is killed in a mysterious accident at a power plant in Japan, the *Breaking Bad* star watching in captivating anguish as she fades into the steam behind the blast door that he himself was forced to close. Brushing off all talk of natural disasters and meltdowns, he becomes a dogged campaigner to the truth, discovering in the process that it not only hurts; it walks, and it walks tall. Something has triggered a wave of killer kaiju – all beetle-like carapace and insectile limbs – that feed on radiation, prompting a rush to relocate nuclear stockpiles that finds our desperate physicist's son, Lieutenant Ford Brody (*Kick-Ass*'s Aaron Taylor-Johnson) on the frontline against the unnatural disaster his old man had been warning about. Ford's wife, Elle Brody (*Avengers: Age Of Ultron*'s Elizabeth Olsen) also comes

under threat, while David Strathairn (*The Bourne Ultimatum*)'s Admiral Stenz and Ken Watanabe (*Batman Begins*, *Inception*)'s Dr Serizawa shore up the heavyweight fringes of this apocalyptic family reunion.

It's big and bold science fantasy, sure, but *Godzilla* is shot with all the smoke clouds of realism that you'd see in a disaster or war movie, and that goes right back to the tense black-and-white armageddon of the source.

"When the BFI re-released a [DVD] version of the 1954 original, I bought it and realised how serious and good that version is," recalls Edwards. "It's all one big metaphor, really, for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and is a very serious take on the monster movie, which is what me, Legendary Pictures and Warner Bros wanted to do for this. It took us a good year, if not a year and a half, to land on a story that felt right to everybody. Very much at the heart of our movie – which is at the heart of the original – is the idea of man versus nature."



Bryan Cranston and Aaron Taylor-Johnson play father and son Joe and Ford Brody.





Rather than Tokyo, the action takes place in a fictional location made especially for the film.

## "I'VE BEEN SECRETLY STALKING GODZILLA FAN FORUMS TO SEE WHAT THEY MAKE OF OUR FILM"

GARETH EDWARDS

"As the human race we do abuse our position a lot, and have never really faced the consequences, and even though there is never going to be the threat of a giant monster coming out of the ocean, the physical consequences of it does happen; we do have tsunamis, we've had meltdowns at nuclear power plants..."

**T**HIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME THAT GODZILLA HAS STOMPED INTO HOLLYWOOD; IT WASN'T EVEN THE FIRST TIME WHEN ROLAND EMMERICH UNLEASHED HIS MUCH-reviled 1998 disasterpiece on the world. In 1955, the original movie was recut with American actors linking up the monster-suit devastation and released

in the US under the title *Godzilla Raids Again!*

Nor is it entirely fair to say that Western misadventures have dragged the brand through the dirt, despite the best attempts of the Hanna-Barbera *Godzilla* cartoon, featuring the titular terror's klutzy comedy nephew Godzooky ("That's the comedy go-to joke for all my friends about the film I'm making," beams Edwards. "They always call it 'Godzooky'").

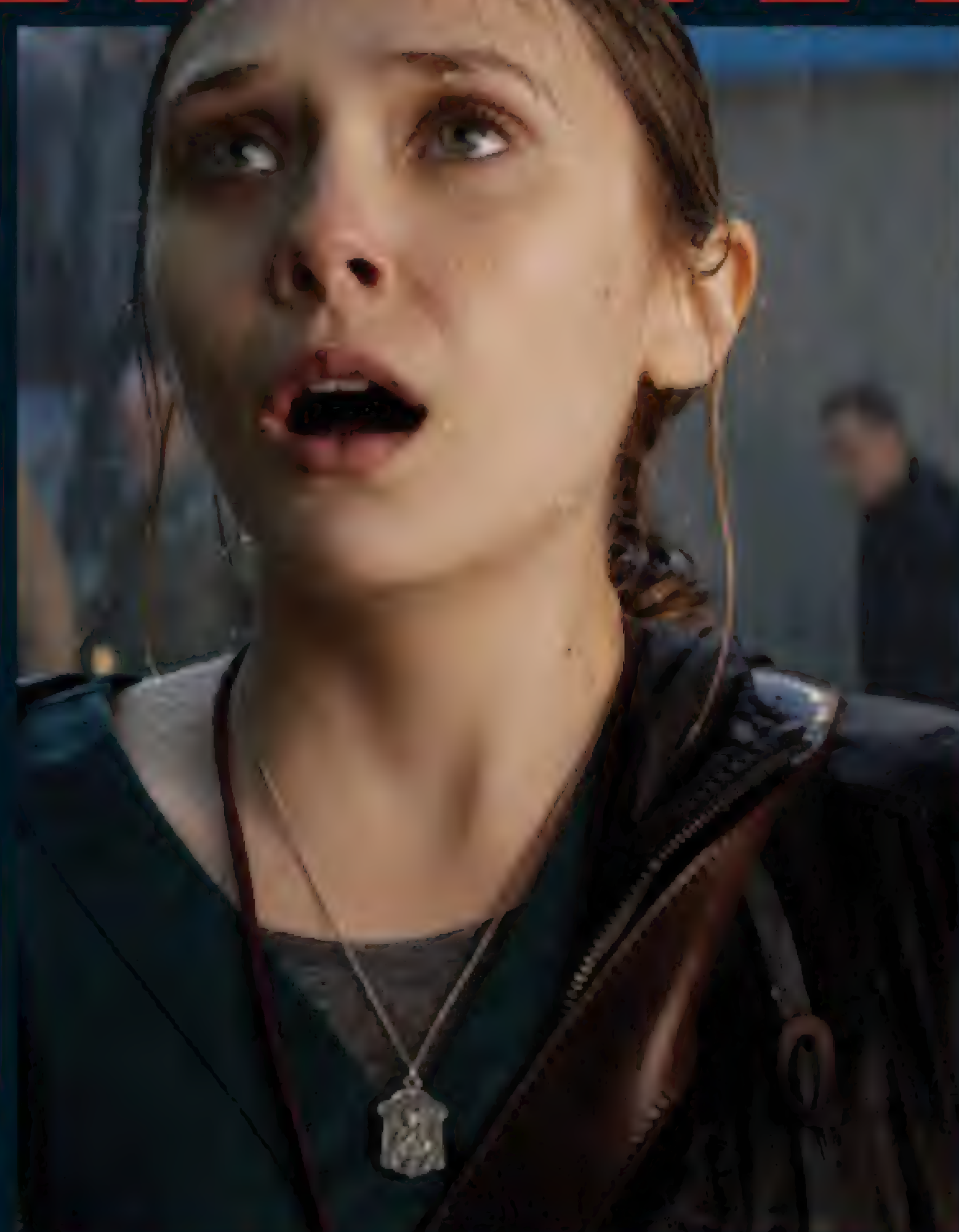
No, the increasingly complex franchise has undergone three distinct periods in its homeland, all with their own particular and peculiar set of tropes, highs, lows and outright absurdities. Much of fandom is a feudal process driven by creator worship ➤

This update will take place on a whole new scale to previous *Godzilla* movies.



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GODZILLA  
Unnatural Disasters



## AGE OF OLSEN

Scarlet Witch star Elizabeth Olsen on playing Elle Brody

**Is it nerve-wracking, entering a world that has been done so many times before and has such a legacy? What makes this different?**

I think Gareth can be really proud of this, because this version really taps back into the whole reason the original *Godzilla* got made to begin with – at least that's what I have learned, about the wrath of nature, and not only nature, but how mankind is responsible for our actions and how that manifests itself in *Godzilla*. That's what this film is about, and what the original was about, and I think he should be proud.

**What was working with Gareth like?**

I've only been working for a few years, but something that I am constantly learning is to surround yourself with people that you feel okay with, and Gareth was incredibly collaborative, right from the first meeting, where he was saying, "Well, this is what we are working with, but that's only the beginning. I want to develop it with the actors." And that's what we did.

**This is a pretty big movie for both you and him, coming from a background of mostly independent movies...**

Before working on *Godzilla*, I had never been on a movie set like this before, but I always pictured it being heads of the studio and

the production company people swarming in and not letting the director do anything, and I always imagined them overshadowing a director's voice, but they never at any point did that with Gareth, because he had his shit together and he had his vision, and it was a good vision. It's crazy to go from a small, contained set where

you know every single person's name, to this set where you don't know most of the people, with most of the stuff happening without you seeing it. Gareth managed to do all of that seamlessly, and everyone felt taken care of.

**What scares you, aside from *Godzilla*?**

Noises in the middle of the night.

**"GARETH EDWARDS HAD HIS SHIT TOGETHER AND HAD HIS VISION"**



# THE LIFE OF BRYAN

Breaking Bad's Bryan Cranston on the all-new king of the monsters



## Can you tell us about your character?

My character is a physicist working as an independent contractor at a nuclear power plant. He's all about the science of it, so when there is an anomaly of data that is being recorded he thinks it might be an earthquake at first, but then the patterns are too regular, so there is something happening here which he can't seem to find a scientific explanation for. Then he realises that it has nothing to do with physics, but it has to do with biology. Then he's like, "Wait a minute! I'm looking at it from a different point of view here," and he adjusts. Then he sounds the alarm and tries to warn everybody, even though he doesn't know what it is.

## And your character is at odds with his son, right?

The relationship between my son and I is a typical one: there is an overworked dad who probably regrets the amount of time spent at work and missed opportunities with his son at home, and as he gets older that creates a rift that we have to figure out how to bridge and work together to battle this demon, so to speak.

## When was the first time you discovered Godzilla, and what was your reaction?

My discovery of Godzilla was back in the Fifties, when the Raymond Burr movie [*Godzilla, King Of The Monsters!*] came out. Watching that on TV, it was astonishing, even for its time. It was amazing to see those special effects that were state-of-the-art at the time. I just loved it! For a boy to watch that, it was great destruction and a wonderful use of miniatures. I loved Godzilla more than, say, King Kong, because Godzilla didn't apologise; he just crushed things. That was the best. As a boy, I thought King Kong got soft and there were tears... no, just crush things, and there was the fire and everything. It was just more dramatic for me, more exciting.

## How is this film different from that one?

Well, our tastes have become more sophisticated since then, and certainly now. That's what's so great about this version. There was careful concern to develop the plotlines and intricacies, and the character development. Without us – as actors and performers – getting into our roles, the audience wouldn't be invested either. What makes it more interesting for me is that I believe audiences will truly be invested in these characters, and riding with them through the tensions, fears and anxieties that the characters are going through. You'll feel it more, and it will ultimately be a better experience for you.

## What was working with Gareth Edwards like?

That's another reason I am here. I saw his movie, *Monsters*, and it was impressive not only from a suspenseful point of view and from its storytelling, but for its restraint, very much like Steven Spielberg did in *Jaws*. It wasn't like, "Here it is! Here it is!" "Oh right, there it is." And there was also very strong character development in it. I really loved it. And it really is another reason why I am here. He asked me to see that movie, and I did, and we talked a lot, and he was very open to ideas and suggestions. He has a great combination for a director, and that is having a clear vision of what he wants, but at the same time being willing and able to be malleable, to be flexible in that. He can

change and adjust to what he thinks might be a better idea or a better way of telling that specific point in the story. I said to him, "It's remarkable. You did a \$200,000 movie, and now you are doing a \$200 million. You have every right to be freaking out of your mind!" And yet he is calm. He hasn't taken on any external pressure. He is not freaking out; he's handling it quite well.

**"I LOVED GODZILLA MORE THAN KING KONG, BECAUSE GODZILLA DIDN'T APOLOGISE – HE JUST CRUSHED THINGS"**

## Finally, why do you think Godzilla is back?

The story of *Godzilla* resonates. For it to be able to go for 60 years, there is something about it that means you can recreate it and retell it in different ways, and it still has some resonance to it – that for some reason, people are drawn to it, generation after generation. At first, I think what it is, is the resiliency of the story, that it could be about imperialism or oppression, and in this story I think it's cautionary, actually. You look at the tale and you see the scope of it, and it's relevant to today's times. It's about harnessing power, dispersing of waste and messing around with Mother Nature. Can you actually do that and get away with that? How long can you get away with that? Living in that milieu is this creature that emerges from the muck and mire. It's very exciting.



Director Gareth Edwards was chosen on the strength of his work on *Monsters*.



## GODZILLA II: THE AFTERSHOCK

Gareth Edwards on the future of the franchise

Despite early chat about a return to Monster Island – the not-so-Pacific setting of 1969's *All Monsters Attack* – and some optimistic positing of a *Pacific Rim* crossover from Guillermo del Toro, Edwards is guarded about the prospect of a sequel. "It would be very arrogant to design this to be more than one film," asserts the director.

"The best chance you have of making another movie is making the first one as good as it could be, [so that] people don't have to have seen the previous *Godzilla* anything, and at the end there's not an expectation of anything afterwards.

"The original *Terminator* and *Back To The Future*, they went off and did other movies after, but they weren't designed to do that. They're just strong films on their own.

"If it does well then we'll have the conversation and figure out if we're going to do something else. We didn't enter into it that way."

fansites straight away, and they're all talking about it. Obviously, it's a goal for us that the fans embrace this film and consider it a true *Godzilla* movie.

"I didn't know what anyone was going to make of what we were doing. At the end of the day, you can't make a film for other people; you've got to make a film that you really want to sit and watch. That's the only way you can approach it, so you keep your fingers crossed that you've done the right thing in the eyes of other people, and what's been so nice recently about the trailer coming out is you get to read those reactions online, and they all seem really excited for it. I can't wait! I've never been to G-Fest, I can't see a scenario where I live my life and I don't go considering what we've done, so I'm sure I'll get to meet all of these people."

**R**EGARDLESS OF HOW WELL THE MOVIE DOES, IT'LL ALWAYS BE A PART OF HIS LIFE, AND WHATEVER ELSE HE DOES, GAWDZILLA ON THE TOHO KINGDOM FORUM WILL ALWAYS remember him as the guy that once made a *Godzilla* film.

"That's what's funny," says Edwards. "When they started designing the poster, the marketing team presented like 30 options. When I looked at them I was thinking, 'Somewhere in here is a poster that I'll probably be signing for the rest of my life, even if nothing else happens, when I'm 60-something someone's going to ask me to sign this poster.' And so that was my joke ➤

"I HAD NO  
IDEA TOHO  
DISTRIBUTED  
MONSTERS IN  
JAPAN, SO WHEN  
I ARRIVED, THEY  
GAVE ME A COPY  
OF MY OWN FILM  
AND MY JAW  
DROPPED"

GARETH  
EDWARDS



➤ – George Lucas or Gene Roddenberry said it's so, and it is – and for *Godzilla* fans, there is simply Toho. The legendary, Tokyo-based film studio and distributor boasts a full roster that ranges from Akira Kurosawa's katana-drawing classic *Seven Samurai* and Studio Ghibli's environmental animated blockbuster *Princess Mononoke*, but outside Japan their name echoes with the furious bellow of *Godzilla*.

"I went over to visit them, and I didn't realise it, but they distributed *Monsters* in Japan – I had no idea," remembers Edwards. "So when I arrived, they gave me a copy of my own film and it had Toho on it, and I was like [his jaw drops in theatrical amazement]. I don't know why I didn't know about that. Then they gave me a whole tour of the studio, and I got to hold the Oxygen Destroyer, which is the device that killed *Godzilla* in the first movie.

"They felt like, I think, they didn't want to limit us creatively, but there were certain things that to them made *Godzilla* *Godzilla*, and there were about five of them. We were very careful to make sure we ticked all of those boxes.

"They weren't the five that you might think," Edwards continues. "We probably ourselves had 20 things, and then they probably did too, but they were kind and said, 'These are the five things that we feel you've got to do.' Things like the number of toes, what the origin is..."

If you're not already a massive *Godzilla* fan then you might not realise just how much of a following the character has. While popular culture acknowledges the first film as an undisputed classic, the rest of the canon is held up as a byword for goofy proto-*Power Rangers* monster battles and the subject of hazy memories of late Eighties/early Nineties visits to Channel 4 ("For a while, as a kid, I couldn't understand that they'd dubbed these things," Edwards remembers. "I thought it was just really bad audio"). The truth is that *Godzilla* has an incredible following all over the world, a passionate band who sustain incredible, fact-packed magazines like *G-Fan*, hold gatherings like G-Fest and covet super-rare action figures from Japan. Small of number but loud and decisive of forum post, self-confessed sci-fi fan Gareth Edwards and Legendary Pictures – the company that built their rep on dork-pleasing comic-book adaptations like *The Dark Knight*, *Watchmen* and *Man Of Steel* – know full well how important that geek voice is, even if they are likely to be discussing whether or not the 'Edwards *Godzilla*' could take down the *Final Wars* *Godzilla*.

"I think they're arguing about it now on the internet!" laughs the director. "I've been surprised. I've been secretly stalking those communities to see what they make of our film – they've been really on top of it. As soon as something breaks it's on the *Godzilla*



# COVER STORY

Godzilla

➤ with the marketing guy: 'You've got to make this good, because I'm going to be looking at this for 30-odd years'. It was really funny [points at the teaser poster of *Godzilla* from the back, lost among the ruins of a city] when we turned to that one, it just felt really familiar – like I'd seen it a million times somehow, but I hadn't. There's no escaping this film at all, whatever comes of it."

Amazingly, despite having only one film to his name, Edwards was handed a summer blockbuster reboot of one of the longest-running franchises in science fiction. That one film was the verite creature drama *Monsters*, a fact that made film fans air-punch when his involvement was revealed, although it might have had the opposite effect on our old friend Gaudzilla.

"I think of some of them were dubious, because *Monsters* was very, very character-driven, and you never saw the monsters until the end," admits Edwards. "I think people were worried that I was going to do that,

maybe. I think the main thing is, if you're a *Godzilla* fan, your agenda would be to have the rest of the world become *Godzilla* fans, and the way you do that is by making a film that's as universal as possible, that everybody would get a kick out of and enjoy – not by making a really obscure, completely self-referential thing that would only appeal to a handful of people, and so my goal was that people who had never seen a *Godzilla* film – maybe didn't even know what it was – came out of this as fans and wanted to buy a toy or something," he laughs, "you know?"

The sub-\$500,000 *Monsters* is not only the sole point of comparison for Edwards' \$160 million tentpole, but if there were other options it would be an apt one, too – both are character-focused, kaiju-filled dramas that have both feet firmly planted in a world that isn't all that dissimilar to ours. Perhaps the biggest challenge for Edwards, then, is not how to make a 21st Century monster movie, but how to keep the focus on both the human



## AARON BOMB

Kick-Ass star Aaron Taylor-Johnson on playing Lieutenant Ford Brody

**How does entering into this world of *Godzilla* feel, with 28 movies before you?**

As far as I am concerned, we are wiping the slate clean and bringing it back to the original. The only one I have seen really is the 1954 one, as that was the one Gareth was drawing on, and even creating the *Godzilla* itself from. I had no real interest in seeing the recent one again. I have a bit of a memory of it and knowing it was pretty crap, so I had no interest in going back.

**This is your first big Hollywood blockbuster. How is that?**

With Gareth, it feels like an intimate, independent kind of movie. We didn't shoot it with 3D cameras or anything, so it's got a more raw feel. Gareth wanted to push it to this more emotional story, so you have something to relate to, and something more appealing than just a special effects movie.

**Were you worried at all about it being a monster movie, that people were going to see it because of the 350-foot lizard?**

I was a bit like, "Come on guys, this is not really what I was thinking about doing next; I was thinking about taking this time out. But it was Gareth that drove me into it. Then you get the list of Bryan Cranston, Lizzy Olsen, Juliette Binoche, and

you go, "OK, there is someone here who is trying to push the boundaries of blockbusters." He is trying to put something together that doesn't have to be shit. And yes, it's not the title role, and it's possibly being carried by the name of what it is, but that takes the pressure off. This wasn't your typical green-screen movie; a lot of it has been shot on location. They CGI-d chaos and buildings smashed up and shit, but that's the beauty of how Gareth works. He did that on *Monsters*.

**Can you tell us about your character?**

I play an EOD Navy Lieutenant, so my world was about researching, especially being British and playing an American military guy. I am also playing a young father, but I am

a young father, so that felt like a comfortable zone to be in, although he is finding it very difficult because he's never around. He has this pretty crap relationship with his father too, and that imitates how he is around his child. He needs to revisit the past and have his dad and him forgive each other for what they have been through to understand what he needs to do. While that is happening, the 'disaster' is happening around the world and splitting everybody up. There is that element of getting back to the one you love and trying to keep your family together.

## DESIGN A GODZILLA POSTER!

Our sister magazine **Photoshop Creative**, in association with Odeon Cinemas and IMAX, is challenging talented artists to design a fan poster for the film. Entries will be judged by Gareth Edwards, and the winning poster will be displayed in cinemas in the UK! To enter, head over to [blog.photoshopcreative.co.uk/readers-challenge](http://blog.photoshopcreative.co.uk/readers-challenge).

The deadline is 20 April 2014, so get creating!

**IMAX**

**ODEON**  
REALIZING THE IMAX EXPERIENCE

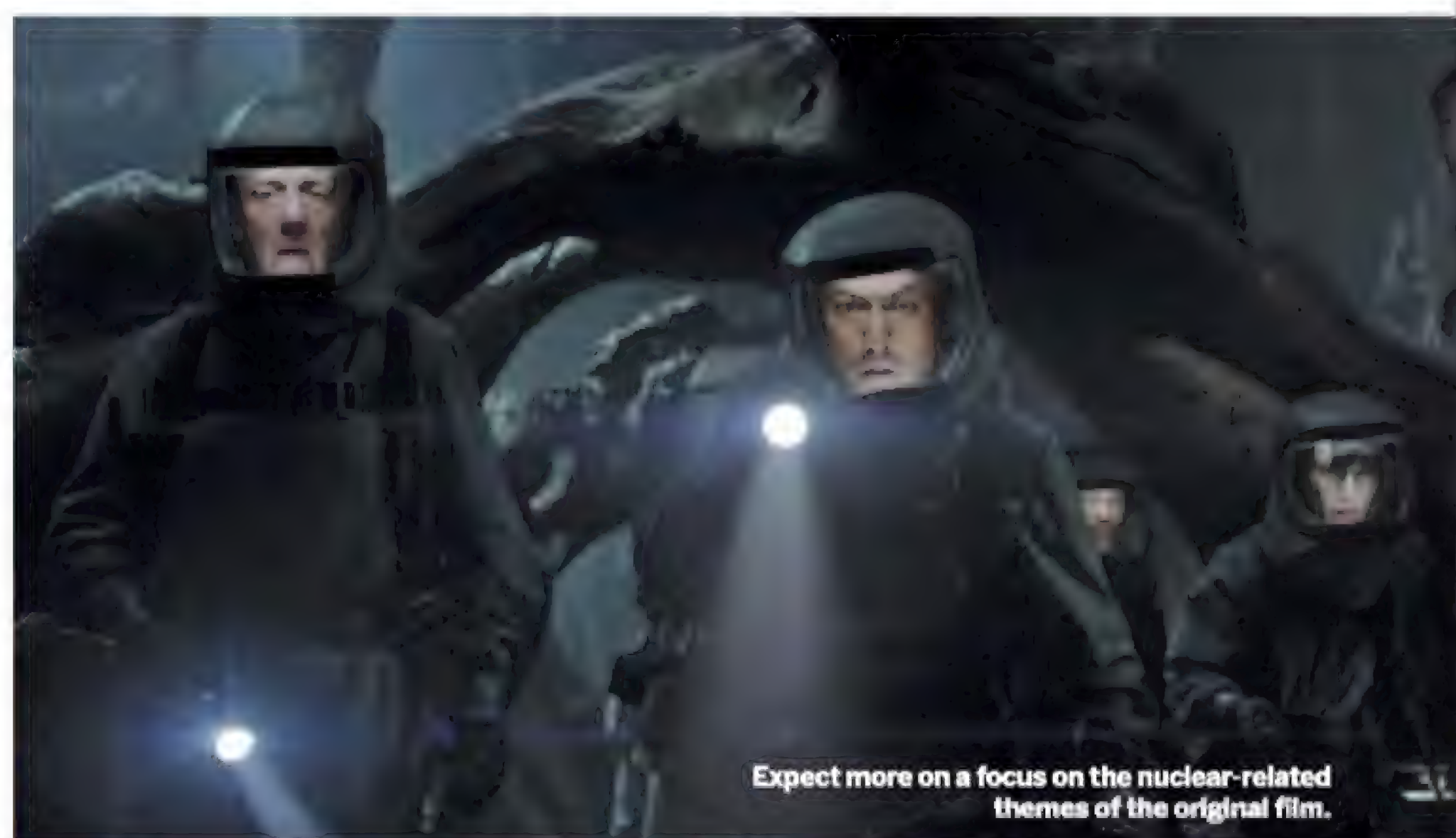




Hopefully this will fare better than the decidedly lightweight 1998 feature.



As always, the Statue of Liberty has a pretty bad time of it.



Expect more on a focus on the nuclear-related themes of the original film.

characters and the title character, the Earth-scouring super-lizard that we unexpectedly root for as events unfold.

"There's definitely a different balance in this film," responds the director. "I go to the cinema a lot – before I started making this, I haven't been in a long time because of this film – but I used to go to the cinema a lot, and there's this feeling I had like when I was a kid that gets harder and harder to recapture as you get older, of the awe, wonder and majesty of fantastical films like this.

**W**EHAD TO PITCH IT TO THE STUDIO AT ONE POINT," HE CONTINUES, "SO YOU GO – IT WAS ACTUALLY IN THE SOUNDSTAGE WHERE THEY FILMED *Casablanca* – and we took over the whole space, posters the size of this wall of pictures for the whole movie with drawings and concept art, and I had to tell the story to the execs and the producers to convince them that this was worth making. At the end I just ad-libbed, saying, 'Look, if you watch this film and don't nearly tear up, get goosebumps and have the hairs on the back of your neck come up, then I've completely failed, and I'm not interested in making a film that doesn't do that.' That's easy talk in a room, and they're like, 'Great, let's do it!'

**"MY GOAL WAS THAT PEOPLE WHO HAD NEVER SEEN A GODZILLA FILM CAME OUT OF THIS AS FANS AND WANTED TO BUY A TOY OR SOMETHING"**

GARETH EDWARDS



"In *Monsters*, I was trying to find a moment like that, and it came at the end of the movie," says Edwards. "The whole movie was one big build up to that. This film has an arc to it that peaks at the end; it's just a much bigger arc in that we're trying our hardest to balance progression of the movie so that we don't give too much that you get bored, and we don't give too little that you get frustrated.

"It's the ultimate art form; being allowed to do something like this – it's a mixture of music, photography, performance, writing and design, and things that work brilliantly as a three-minute moment, put together into two hours have a different effect. And so it's this one organic thing, it's not a load of separate things. That's the most difficult part, I think, to not make it into a series of set pieces, but make it a single story that takes you all the way to the end of the movie."

To go from a hands-on, micro-budget flick to a big-budget studio blockbuster in a single move is impressive enough, but the DIY ethic that characterised *Monsters* – in which Edwards not only shot the movie himself, but did all the VFX in post-production – has managed to carry over into a project that

must be dazzling in its complexity for even the most seasoned director.

"You try and be involved in as many different areas as you can," Edwards admits. "It's exhausting. There're so many people that are brilliant at what they do, working everywhere 24-seven and trying to keep up with everything is impossible. It constantly seems that most of what you do all day long is mostly give feedback, answer questions and probably annoy a lot of people," he laughs. "It's kind of the way you affect the film, it's such a big machine, and you've got to constantly try and steer it, or else it'll just go off on its own course. I think films like this that work really well are always ones where the filmmaker has pushed with all their might to give it their voice, and I think audiences pick up on that when it doesn't feel generic. It feels like someone is trying to do something a bit different.

"I've been on anything as hard as this – it's just been non-stop for a minimum of two years straight of just constant... constant.

"I imagine having a child might be equal to this," he finishes, "but we've got a 350-foot child, and he takes a lot of clearing up after!"

Godzilla will be released on 16 May.



GREETINGS FROM...

# MONSTERFEST



PACK YOUR NIGHT-VISION GOGGLES, A PACKED LUNCH AND, WHERE POSSIBLE, A GIANT MECHA SUIT. HERE'S OUR GUIDE TO THE WORLD'S 15 GREATEST MONSTERS...

WORDS KRYSTAL SIM ILLUSTRATIONS KEVIN SCULLY



# MONSTER ISLAND



## GODZILLA

• **AS SEEN IN:** GODZILLA (1954), GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN (1955), SON OF GODZILLA (1967), TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA (1975), THE RETURN OF GODZILLA (1984), GODZILLA (1998), GODZILLA (2014),

• **HEIGHT:** 50 METRES (1954), 107 METRES (2014)

• **WEIGHT:** BETWEEN 20,000 TONS (1954) AND 55,000 TONS (MILLENNIUM ERA)

• **EATING HABITS:** NUCLEAR RADIATION, A LOT OF FISH

• **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** ATOMIC BREATH

• **AREAS DESTROYED:** TOKYO, NEW YORK

**Godzilla is the** first and last word for any kaiju fanatic. His origins are unclear, but it's most likely that he is prehistoric sea monster, mutated by nuclear radiation – also his primary energy source.

His signature attack is his atomic breath. This unleashes a concentrated blast of radiation from his mouth, often mistaken for fire. Godzilla's physical strength is massive, and the regular military arsenal barely scratches his tough, armoured scales. Only weapons like the Oxygen Destroyer have any hope of taking him down.

The beast has little time for mankind, but will use its nuclear sites for energy boosts.

This creature is unpredictable. He has ravaged many cities, particularly long-suffering Tokyo, but does side with humanity against common enemies. Among other kaiju, his rivals include King Kong, Mechagodzilla and the ferocious King Ghidorah, but he often comes out on top.

If you are looking to catch a glimpse of Godzilla in the wild, remember to keep your distance and listen out for that roar.

## KING KONG

• **AS SEEN IN:** KING KONG (1933), THE SON OF KONG (1933), KING KONG VS GODZILLA (1962), KING KONG ESCAPES (1967), KING KONG (1976), KING KONG LIVES (1986), KING KONG (2005)

• **HEIGHT:** 15-40 METRES

• **WEIGHT:** 1,000-25,000 TONS

• **EATING HABITS:** BAMBOO AND DAMSELS

• **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** SUPER STRENGTH

• **AREAS DESTROYED:** NEW YORK

**One of the** first kaiju to be classified, King Kong is a primate on a colossal scale. Once a resident of the brutal Skull Island, he is one of the most feared and fierce fighters in the world.

A natural enemy of man – with the exception of glamorous blondes – the great ape's key strength is his powerful fists and super strength. He can take down a Tyrannosaurus Rex by breaking its jaw, and rigorously defends his territory against predators.

King Kong is also a rival of Godzilla, and is one of the few creatures able to withstand the monster's atomic breath and defeat him. Kong has also developed the ability to absorb electricity from power lines for energy and direct it against his opponent as an attack.

He would probably have preferred a life outside the limelight, and his career in showbusiness proved short-lived. Kaiju spotters are advised to avoid flash photography and throw their biplane license away.

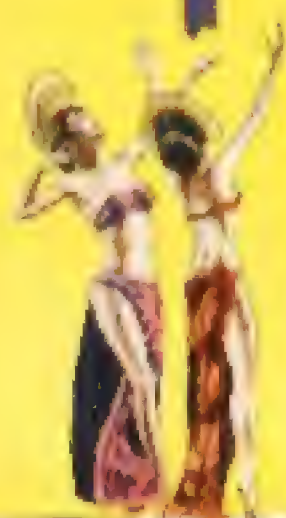


**MIGHTIEST  
MONSTER  
IN ALL  
CREATION!**

**RAVISHING  
A UNIVERSE  
FOR LOVE!**

TOHOSCOPE  
EASTMAN  
COLOR

**MOTHRA**



- ▶ **AS SEEN IN:** MOTHRA (1961), MOTHRA VS GODZILLA (1964), DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (1968), REBIRTH OF MOTHRA (1996)
- ▶ **HEIGHT:** 80 METRES
- ▶ **WEIGHT:** 15,000 TONS
- ▶ **EATING HABITS:** UNKNOWN – POSSIBLY CARDIGANS
- ▶ **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** POISONOUS SCALES
- ▶ **AREAS DESTROYED:** BEIJING, TOKYO, HOKKAIDO

One of nature's greatest kaiju beauties, Mothra is a stunning creature. Worshipped as a god on the peaceful Infant Island, she is a passive sort who only attacks to protect its followers or eggs.

## MOTHRA

As a huge caterpillar, Mothra is slow yet destructive – a form that's effective against artillery. Once she finds a quiet spot, she spins a cocoon that even atomic cannons can't penetrate.

She emerges as a beautiful moth-like creature, with wings that cause hurricane-strength winds. She can also spray silk against her opponents, one of her most risky moves being spraying

poisonous scales. This can cause Mothra to be fatally wounded.

Benign but by no means weak, Mothra has gone toe-to-toe with Godzilla and orchestrated a team-up between other kaiju against the evil King Ghidorah.

While it isn't recommended that you reach out to kaiju of this strength, Mothra shouldn't cause the average spotter much trouble.

NEVER A  
HORROR  
LIKE  
IT!



## RODAN

- ▶ **AS SEEN IN:** RODAN (1956), GHIDORAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER (1964), DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (1968), GODZILLA VS MECHAGODZILLA II (1993), GODZILLA FINAL WARS (2004)
- ▶ **HEIGHT:** 50 METRES
- ▶ **WEIGHT:** 15,000 TONS
- ▶ **EATING HABITS:** MEGANULON AND PEOPLE
- ▶ **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** HURRICANE WINGS
- ▶ **AREAS DESTROYED:** MOSCOW, NEW YORK, YAWATA

### Mutated pteranodon

Rodan is another rival-turned-ally of Godzilla, and one of the few monsters unaffected by the beast's atomic breath.

Rodan can ravage buildings thanks to its supersonic slipstream, or crush them under the sheer weight of landing. Tank and rocket launchers barely make a dent on its wings, which are strong

enough to blast back people and even traffic.

Although it has been known to turn its eye to human targets – albeit sometimes while under alien control – Rodan is perhaps one of the more cooperative wild kaiju. It aided Mothra against King Ghidorah, and helped Godzilla to protect a baby godzillasaurus at the cost of its own life, making it a most complicated creature.

We'd recommend bringing a few meganulon bugs with you to distract Rodan if you get into a spot of bother. Failing that, you could try to trigger some kind of eruption in its volcano lair.

## GAMERA 2 ATTACK OF LEGION



## GAMERA

- ▶ **AS SEEN IN:** GAMERA (1965), GAMERA VS BARUGON (1966), GAMERA VS JIGER (1970), GAMERA: SUPER MONSTER (1980), GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE (1995), GAMERA THE BRAVE (2006)
- ▶ **HEIGHT:** 60-80 METRES
- ▶ **WEIGHT:** 7,200 TONS
- ▶ **EATING HABITS:** FIRE!
- ▶ **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** PLASMA FIREBALLS
- ▶ **AREAS DESTROYED:** FUJISAWA, TOKYO

This last specimen of a gigantic, prehistoric species of super turtle is something of an oddity. Some say Gamera was dormant in the Arctic until an atomic blast caused by a dogfight between US and Russian forces reawakened him.

Others suggest he is a bio-engineered guardian, created by the people of Atlantis to defeat the vampiric reptilian alien, Gyaos. Whatever its origins,

Gamera falls into the unlikely protector category of kaiju, as he sometimes fights for humanity's sake.

Gamera eats fire and can hit his enemies with balls of plasma, and his shell is extremely resistant to attack. Whether against other monsters or pesky military firepower, they just bounce off. Strangely for a turtle, Gamera walks on two legs most of the time, and can fly.

His weakness is cold, but a few ice cubes won't do it – we're talking high-powered freezing spray. And remember – this smart turtle will sometimes play dead while he's regenerating, so don't turn your back on him.







## GODZILLA

Greetings From Monster Island



## KING GHIDORAH

» **AS SEEN IN:** GHIDORAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER (1964), DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (1968), GODZILLA VS GIGAN (1972), GODZILLA VS KING GHIDORAH (1991), GODZILLA FINAL WARS (2004)

» **HEIGHT:** 150 METRES

» **WEIGHT:** 30,000 TONS

» **EATING HABITS:** DELICIOUS HUMANS

» **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** FIRES GRAVITY BEAMS FROM HIS MOUTHS

» **AREAS DESTROYED:** DESTROYED VENUS THEN SET HIS SIGHTS ON EARTH, WRECKING A GOOD PORTION OF JAPAN IN THE PROCESS

It takes some kind of monster to get Godzilla on the ropes, but it isn't every day you meet a three-headed, golden dragon from Venus.

This ancient flying menace from outer space has one purpose: destruction. Whatever you do, do not approach without the help of at least three famous kaiju. Remember,

this is Godzilla's greatest foe, and even he can't defeat him alone. Keep your distance, and try to signal Mothra for assistance.

On top of his powerful wings and sharp claws, Ghidorah can fire gravity beams from his three snarling heads to devastating effect. He's also been known to control other kaiju for his own nefarious ends.

Worryingly, defeat doesn't always mean the end for this goliath. Lop off a head if you wish, but a trip to the local DIY shop later, and Mecha-King Ghidorah could be terrorising your neighbourhood.

Students of Japanese mythology may spot this specimen's resemblance to the fabled eight-headed dragon Yamata no Orochi.

## CLOVER

» **AS SEEN IN:** CLOVERFIELD (2008)

» **HEIGHT:** 107 METRES

» **WEIGHT:** 5,800 TONS

» **EATING HABITS:** WHALES, HORSES AND PEOPLE

» **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND TOXIC PARASITES

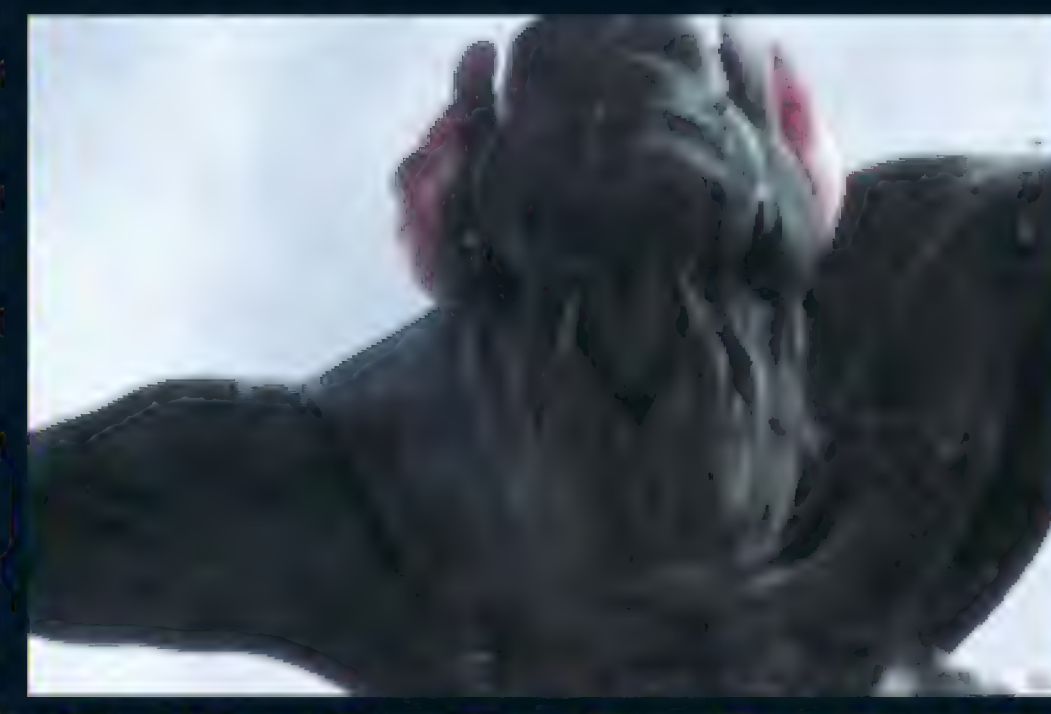
» **AREAS DESTROYED:** NEW YORK

**There is nothing** more dangerous than a cornered animal. This practically newborn creature seems permanently spooked, making it even more terrifying as it lurches through New York.

Awakened from the depths of the ocean, it's a bit of a gangly, pale thing, with long limbs and the strangest-looking body. It can stand upright or walk on its fingers, and despite its size, it's fast. Nothing if not ambitious, it even tried to eat the Statue of Liberty's head.

It's also covered in hideous dog-sized parasites that shed off the monster and run amok. These nasty things can climb walls rather like spiders, and their bite causes bleeding from the eyes, nose and eventually an explosive death.

Clover is capable of withstanding missile and artillery attacks with very little damage, so it's more than a match for the armed forces. Not quite as charming as Godzilla, but this American kaiju tries its best.



## ADAM

» **AS SEEN IN:** NEON GENESIS EVANGELION (1995)

» **HEIGHT:** UNKNOWN

» **WEIGHT:** UNKNOWN

» **EATING HABITS:** UNKNOWN

» **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** ANTI AT FIELD, CAPABLE OF EXTERMINATING ALL LIFE ON EARTH

» **AREAS DESTROYED:** ADAM EXPLODES IN ANTARCTICA, WIPING OUT ALL LIFE IN THE AREA AND MELTING THE ICE. THE RESULTING NATURAL DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE HAS A GLOBAL IMPACT

**Only the most** dedicated of kaiju spotters will find Adam, the First Angel, with this rare life form being one of Earth's two Seeds of Life.

Adam was created by the First Ancestral Race billions of years ago, and sent to Earth along with its Angel progeny to be the origins of life.

Another Seed, Lilith, crashed on Earth and

Adam was placed in suspended animation, meaning humans are her descendants, and Earth doesn't belong to Adam and his angels. It's OK to be confused, we are.

Angels come in different forms. The Evangelions developed to combat them are derived from Adam's genetics. Only destroying their internal power source can kill them.

## ADAM WAS CREATED BY THE FIRST ANCESTRAL RACE





# COVER STORY

Godzilla



## KNIFEHEAD

- » **AS SEEN IN:** PACIFIC RIM (2013)
- » **HEIGHT:** 96 METRES
- » **WEIGHT:** 8,700 TONS
- » **EATING HABITS:** UNKNOWN
- » **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** KNIFE-SHAPED HEAD AND BITE
- » **AREAS DESTROYED:** KILLED DURING AN ATTACK ON ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

A mega-kaiju if ever there was one, this alien brute was built for absolute devastation. Named for his long and sharp nose, Knifehead is the terror of the Alaskan coast.

So huge it has been confused for an island.

this amphibious creature has thick shell-like armour to protect itself from attack and three sharp claws on each of its four arms.

Even if you have access to a jaeger, you might be left feeling like you brought a spoon to a knife



fight. The Category III kaiju not only means business when it comes to its fighting ability; it also shows signs of cunning.

Mecha pilots will be in for quite a fight. It may be worth applying the rules of the 'double tap' to this creature, as the first encounter may not be your last. You may also notice its resemblance to Guiron. Perhaps a distant cousin?

## TITANS

- » **AS SEEN IN:** ATTACK ON TITAN (2013)
- » **HEIGHT:** FROM THREE METRES TO THE 60-METRE-TALL COLOSSAL TITAN
- » **WEIGHT:** UNKNOWN
- » **EATING HABITS:** PUNY HUMANS
- » **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** SUPER STRENGTH AND REGENERATION
- » **AREAS DESTROYED:** ERR, THE WORLD, BASICALLY

These humanoid giants suddenly appeared in the global countryside without warning, forcing humanity into one giant walled city.

Monstrous mouths, odd proportions and a taste for human flesh make these naked hulks a dominant species in their habitat. They appear to live in some kind of peace with other wildlife, as they don't feed

on anything but delicious humans.

Their physiology is mysterious and many lives have been lost taking down Titans. One weak spot is the nape of the neck – hit this and they can be killed. They also range in size from a few metres in height right up to 60 metres.

What is left of humanity is penned into a country encircled by three walls. The richest survivors live in the innermost area, while the poor reside in the outermost areas, leaving us to question who the real monsters are. It's totally still the Titans, because they will eat your mum.



## THE KRAKEN

- » **AS SEEN IN:** CLASH OF THE TITANS (1981), CLASH OF THE TITANS (2010)
- » **HEIGHT:** 15 METRES
- » **WEIGHT:** 180 TONS
- » **EATING HABITS:** PRINCESSES TIED TO ROCKS
- » **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** FOUR POWERFUL ARMS
- » **AREAS DESTROYED:** ARGOS

Legend has it that the Kraken wiped out the city of Argos in punishment for an item being out of stock, but there has never been any concrete proof. What we do know about this barnacled badass is that he is Poseidon's go-to monster when it comes to city-wide destruction.

It cuts through waves as silent as a shark. Only when the Kraken emerges from the depths – using its four tentacle-like arms to pull itself up – does the full scale of his size and strength become a terrifying prospect for any nearby human sacrifices.

Large, powerful and single-mindedly bloody, this sea-dwelling creature can destroy an entire city in mere minutes. Killing it is an extremely silly idea, unless you have access to advanced winged transportation, a steampunk owl, and most importantly, the head of the gorgon Medusa.

One of the most imposing kaiju out there, we wonder how he'd fare against another monster.





# ATTACK OF THE 50 FT. WOMAN



## NANCY FOWLER ARCHER

- ▶ **AS SEEN IN:** ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN (1958), ATTACK OF THE 50 FT WOMAN (1993)
- ▶ **HEIGHT:** 15 METRES
- ▶ **WEIGHT:** 46 TONS
- ▶ **EATING HABITS:** UNKNOWN
- ▶ **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** UNEXPRESSED ANGER ISSUES
- ▶ **AREAS DESTROYED:** CALIFORNIAN DESERT TOWN

They say Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. Unfortunately, they don't offer any guidance for the fury of a scorned woman so large she could have her own weather system.

Desert town socialite Nancy Fowler Archer's encounter with a white ball of light and a giant alien hand transforms her from frustrated wife into a vengeful giantess. But in fairness, this not-so-little-lady has every reason to be upset.

No one in town believes the story, and her philandering husband Harry has one eye on her fortune and another on his latest girlfriend, Honey. Nancy doesn't let this bring her down, of course, and her 'condition' makes wreaking havoc on the doubting townsfolk – and her hopeless hubby – a breeze.

Look out for her seemingly papier-mâché hands and approach with caution. Gunshots will have no effect, so you'll have to make sure you're near some power lines if you want to get out of her clutches alive.



## MONGO. THE GIANT GINGERBREAD MAN

- ▶ **AS SEEN IN:** SHREK 2 (2004)
- ▶ **HEIGHT:** AROUND 18 METRES
- ▶ **WEIGHT:** SURPRISINGLY LIGHT
- ▶ **EATING HABITS:** UNKNOWN
- ▶ **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** GINGERBREAD ARMS
- ▶ **AREAS DESTROYED:** FAR FAR AWAY

If you face a castle full of guards and a miffed-off Fairy Godmother, you could do worse than entrust yourself to this gentle giant, a rare but impressive sight in the land of Far Far Away.

Known for his bravery and humongous build, Mongo is slow-moving but resilient. He's a happy sort of chap until confronted with a flaming catapult, and can withstand heavy projectile attacks – in fact, they just make him mad. But woe betide you if he loses a gumball button in the fight.

His particular weakness is warm milk. The first dunk might only graze him, but a second has the potential to break his biscuit body apart with tragic consequences.

Is he the last of his kind? The only oversized confectionery-based giant left in this odd, fairy-tale land? No one knows, but if you know the Muffin Man who lives in Drury Lane, there's every chance you'll meet Mongo.

# TERROR FROM OUTER SPACE!



## Y MIR

- ▶ **AS SEEN IN:** 20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH (1957)
- ▶ **HEIGHT:** 7 METRES
- ▶ **WEIGHT:** 10 TONS
- ▶ **EATING HABITS:** SULPHUR
- ▶ **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** CLAWS OF DOOM
- ▶ **AREAS DESTROYED:** ROME

Washed up along with a crashed spaceship, this alien life form grew from jelly-tot to gargantuan terror, taking in the sights and sounds of the Italian countryside and Rome's hottest tourist spots. Well, even grotesque monsters need a vacation now and then.

Something of a misunderstood soul, he only lashes out when provoked, so best keep your pitchfork to yourself. Trackers hoping to get a closer look should avoid being downwind; that sulphur diet is not to be sniffed at.

Ymir's love of culture is topped only by his love of spectacle, and he was been known to climb local monuments for maximum exposure. If you and the police manage to trap him at a local landmark, it may take a lot of ammunition, shouting and protracted death scenes before you can finish him off. One of the smaller kaiju in the wild, but possibly one of the hammiest actors.

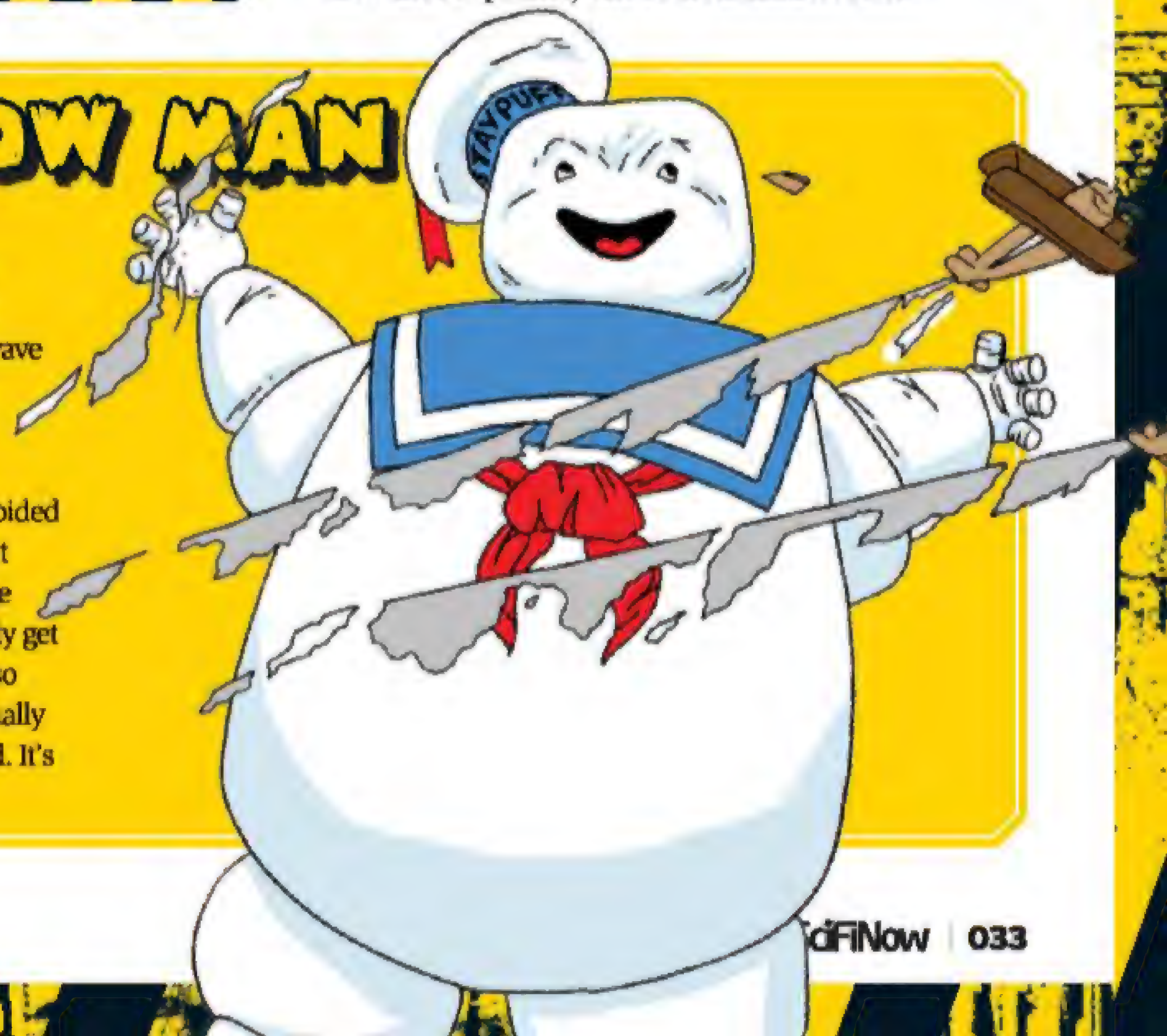
# STAY PUFT MARSHMALLOW MAN

- ▶ **AS SEEN IN:** GHOSTBUSTERS (1984)
- ▶ **HEIGHT:** 34 METRES
- ▶ **WEIGHT:** 1,100 TONS
- ▶ **EATING HABITS:** SOULS, PROBABLY
- ▶ **MOST LETHAL WEAPON:** POWERFUL MARSHMALLOW FISTS
- ▶ **AREAS DESTROYED:** NEW YORK

Do not let his cheerful, marshmallowy exterior fool you; the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man is pure evil. One of the largest brand icons to ever be made sentient by an evil consciousness, Mr Stay Puft is in fact a manifestation of Gozer the Gozerian – an extremely powerful and malignant deity from another dimension.

He can be seen roaming the streets of New York City single-mindedly looking for Ghostbusters to smite. If left unchecked, he would happily wipe out city blocks with a wave of those powerful arms. His mere presence causes widespread panic, but his sinister smile barely slips.

Encounters with Mr Stay Puft are best avoided unless you have the right equipment. A blast from a proton pack will only char and enrage him, but crossing the streams will most likely get rid of his hulking mass for good. You can also try to avoid confrontation altogether by casually dropping into conversation that you're a god. It's worth a try...





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HOW

# MARVEL TOOK TV

= & WHY THEY WENT TO =

# NETFLIX

WORDS JODIE TYLEY, JAMES HOARE INTERVIEWS JAMES HOARE

THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF MARVEL TV REVEALS THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES SHAKE-UPS WHERE THE MODERN MARVEL BRAND REALLY BEGAN, AND WE LOOK TO A FUTURE THAT INCLUDES DAREDEVIL, IRON FIST, JESSICA JONES AND LUKE CAGE...





All-new Marvel NOW!  
Daredevil by writer Mark  
Waid and artist Chris  
Samnee is on sale now  
digitally via Comixology.

## MARVEL TAKE TV

How Marvel Took TV And Why They Went To Netflix



**W**

**HEN THE AVENGERS  
WERE ASSEMBLED,  
DISNEY WAS COUNTING  
ON THEM TO DO MORE  
THAN JUST SAVE THE  
DAY. EARTH'S MIGHTIEST  
WERE GOING TO RESCUE**

their prime-time scheduling, just as Disney swooped in and saved Marvel's movie studio when they bought it for \$4 million in 2009.

Pre-*Agents Of SHIELD*, ABC's viewer demographic was skewed towards middle-aged women, but president of ABC Entertainment Paul Lee pounced on the opportunity to broaden the channel's appeal and attract more advertisers as a result. He declared their Marvel experiment a success when he spoke out at the recent Television Critics Association: "It is the biggest male drama we have. I am so proud of how it has arced out in the last nine episodes. I do admit that the show took some time to find 'our sea legs', but I think it picked up creatively when they started working more fully with our studio partners."

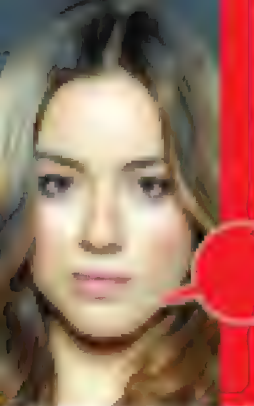
Indeed, *Agents Of SHIELD* is sharing characters with the Marvel Cinematic Universe, with cameos from Samuel L. Jackson's Nick Fury and most recently Jaimie Alexander as *Thor*'s Lady Sif. The shady organisation also had a starring

role in the latest big-screen solo *Avengers* outing, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. Synergy is Disney's speciality, of course, but it's something Marvel Entertainment has been striving towards for the past two decades. Before Marvel president Kevin Feige stepped in, it was Avi Arad in the hot seat. He was Mr Synergy himself, having been the CEO of the company Toy Biz, which took over Marvel Comics in 1996. Arad was involved in pulling Marvel Comics back from bankruptcy, and boosted the company's profile through licensing and movies.

Marvel and Disney seems like the perfect fit, but back then the notion would have been as far-fetched as the wackiest of cartoons, according to former president of Marvel's TV arm – first at Marvel Productions, then New World Entertainment Domestic Television and finally at licensing central, Marvel Character Group – Rick Ungar: "It would have been difficult to get Disney's attention," he says. "20 years ago, the comic-book business was kind of at a valley. It was not as strong as it had previously been." It was a matter of convincing the men with money that comic-book material could be as good a source for entertainment as any other medium, he continues: "It wasn't hostility, per se; it just hadn't really occurred to people. Hollywood's







## PUTTING MARVEL ON THE MAP

Your guide to superhero-spotting in New York City



like that – until you prove it, we're not that interested. It started to be proven with the *X-Men* film, where people went, 'Gee, this could really work and do very well!' Then along comes *Spider-Man* and blows the doors off, and next thing you know, here we are all those years later, and it seems like every film's a superhero film."

The small screen is quickly catching on, but it's not as easy. While Disney has the kid-friendly channel XD as a platform for animated shows and the ABC network to showcase their event TV show *Agents Of SHIELD*, there isn't a neat space to support those lesser-known characters. They might be able to carry a show, but if they're lacking in broad appeal, where do they go?

There's an interesting parallel situation over at Warner Bros. The movie studio owns DC Comics and a catalogue that boasts some of pop culture's biggest brands, but their small-screen arm fills the exact niche that Disney lacks: The CW. It's the perfect outlet for shows like *Smallville*, *Arrow*, *iZombie* and *The Flash*, having an established reputation for glossy young adult dramas that acts as an obvious fit for superheroics. But when it came to developing the Bat prequel *Gotham* – a grittier prospect fronted by *The OC* star Ben McKenzie – it found a home on FOX instead. Police commissioner James Gordon wasn't the only DC character that had to be shunted onto a more appropriate network, as occult detective and conman John Constantine is heading up his own series on NBC.

When it comes to putting capes on TV, then, DC definitely has the head-start, but the wind is changing. Hot on the heels

of Marvel's *Agents Of SHIELD*, Disney is teaming up with Netflix to bring four live-action TV series and one miniseries to the online streaming service. It seems like a bold and unexpected move by Disney, who are fiercely protective of their brands, but it's actually the culmination of decades' worth of behind-the-scenes misadventures to pull Marvel out of the polybags and into the prime time. Ungar reveals that what we're seeing now has been going on since the Nineties, where a handful of people strived to put this incredible library of characters to work on television.

"We've finally hit a point where the value of live-action television versions are catching on," says Ungar. "Back in my time we were toying with doing a *Thor* live-action show, we got the script and it didn't happen because there was a lack of confidence in *Thor*. Now, we know from the movies that they were wrong. It took a while for the television folks to go, 'Hey, wait a minute, these live-action films are the biggest thing in the world – why are we not doing live-action television series?'"

**DU** E TO AIR 2015, THE FOUR CORE SHOWS ARE BEING DEVELOPED BY MARVEL TELEVISION AND FOCUS ON DAREDEVIL, FOLLOWED BY SUPERHERO-TURNED-PRIVATE EYE JESSICA

Jones, master of kung-fu Iron Fist and the super-strong former Power Man, Luke Cage. Like their comic-book incarnations, they'll exist in the shared universe of what was one of New York's grottiest neighbourhoods, Hell's Kitchen. Netflix will air 13 episodes from each series, culminating in a *Defenders* miniseries that will bring all the characters ➤



After a shaky start, *Agents Of SHIELD*'s fortunes have improved.





# AGENT PROVOCATEUR

Agents Of SHIELD's Chloe Bennet on Skye's shady past, playing pranks and Chewbacca bath robes... INTERVIEW DAVID SCARBOROUGH

**S**he might not have Tony Stark's suit of armour, wield Thor's mighty Mjölnir or be comfortable busting villains while wearing a star-spangled outfit, but Chloe Bennet's SHIELD agent Skye has proven to be one of the key characters in the Marvel universe today. Debuting on Marvel's *Agents Of SHIELD* as the resident hacktivist, Skye has since transformed in the second half of the series into the biggest mystery at the heart of the show.

Not only that, but Bennet confirms that everything is about to get more intense in the final 12 episodes, which introduces characters from the expanded Marvel lore and builds towards a climatic crossover episode with *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. We talk to the rising star about her geek credentials, on-set pranks and how not to impress Joss Whedon...

**After the lukewarm reception to the first ten episodes of *Agents Of SHIELD*, the second half of the season has been well received.**

I think for any first season show it takes a couple of episodes for it to really find its footing, and now it has definitely started to do that. Our showrunners and writers are really thorough, and we wanted to make sure that the characters are really established, so I think it makes it more enjoyable when things get really crazy – which it does. I actually just read the next episode and I was just walking around my house frantically after I read it, just kind of nervous and anxious. I was just reeling about it because I couldn't get it out of my mind.

**One of the big mysteries now is Skye's past and why she's considered a 0-8-4 – an object of unknown origin. How is that going to affect her character in the rest of the season?**

There are a lot of questions. At the beginning of the season I'm an orphan, you don't know about her parents or anything. Now all the information is out, we don't know even more. Being a 0-8-4 opens up the possibilities of what I am. I could be an alien, an orphan with superpowers – there are so many different possibilities.

**Working with Joss Whedon on the pilot, how much input did he have on the development of your character over the season?**

He was awesome to work with on the pilot, and he played a huge part in casting me as the character – he really stuck his neck out for me. He's an executive producer, he is working on *The Avengers 2* right now, but he definitely oversees the show as much as he can. But really the showrunners, they're there every single day on set and running the show from there. He's watching the episodes and doing a bunch when he's not doing all the *Avengers* planning.

**Playing Skye, which other character do you enjoy most sharing scenes with?**

It kind of is [Coulson and Skye] because there's something really sweet and endearing about it. They start to share a lot of... I don't want to say secrets, but experiences together. Also, he's just really funny. The whole cast is just a lot of fun. Iain [De Caestecker] and Elizabeth [Henstridge] are hilarious, the directors hate any scenes with Fitz and Simmons because we're always cracking each other up. Iain and I have a prank war going on – that makes it difficult to get work done!

**What sort of pranks do you play on each other?**

We have a bunch of snow on our lot from a different show, so I covered his car. Then he shovelled all that snow onto my car, and then I put snow all in front of his trailer door so he couldn't get in, so he put a whole block of hard-ice snow in my toilet in my trailer. It started overflowing, and I couldn't use the bathroom for hours because I couldn't remove the ice! That's what's happening on set.

**Did you have to prove your geek credentials in the audition?**

I think they could tell I was a big geek anyway – I have a Chewbacca bathrobe that I got at San Diego Comic-Con. I bought it as an ironic joke, but I wear it all the time, especially on set. When they look for me they're looking for a Chewbacca roaming around the set.

I was actually late for my audition because I got pulled over by the cops for speeding, trying to get the audition early. I got there late, and they were waiting for me in the room, and I ran in sweaty and looking like a

mess – "I'm so sorry! I got pulled over!" – and that's how I first met Joss Whedon. I think they could tell I wasn't very cool.

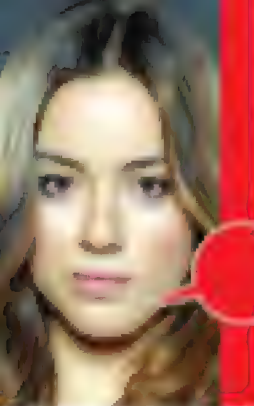
**The second half of the season incorporates a lot of the expanded comic universe, like the inclusion of Deathlok. Is this something that'll become more important in the future?**

Definitely! Because we're in the same universe as the movies, it'll be something we will be bringing into the show, although it'll still be about SHIELD. We've got some cameos coming up, but I can't really say why or what. We've got Lady Sif, Lorelei and Deathlok coming up, some really great episodes featuring them. I just love seeing any Asgardian on Earth, because it's really funny. We have some great comedic beats with that.

**Have you been campaigning to have any of the Avengers to appear on the show, and if you could have one which one would that be?**

How much fun would it be to see Iron Man on our show? He's really good with computers, and so am I, so I would get to have a lot of scenes with him. I may or may not have a crush on him, I don't know. It sounds selfish, but if I was being totally selfish then I'd pick Thor, which would have nothing to do with his six-pack, muscles and tanned skin!





# INVESTIGATION

Marvel Take TV

➤ together into one street-level *Avengers Assemble*-style team-up. This intricately mapped-out method of storytelling is synonymous with the Marvel Cinematic Universe, so it makes sense to create a scaled-down Netflix/Disney universe on the small screen – and it's a neat mirror image to have a scaled-down Marvel inner-city instead of the weird and wonderful Marvel cosmos.

**DRAFTED IN TO WRITE THE DAREDEVIL SERIES IS THE CABIN IN THE WOODS DIRECTOR DREW GODDARD, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED HIS LOVE FOR THE SUPERHERO,**

saying: "Like everyone else, I love *Born Again*; that was a seminal work for me," he told *Collider*. "Everything Frank Miller did on *Daredevil* is like the Bible." To make an impact against Marvel's growing catalogue of brightly lit, larger-than-life heroes, Netflix's *Daredevil* series needs to take us into the territory DC own with *The Dark Knight* (Miller's *Year One* was a huge influence on *Batman Begins*, so Miller's high-profile *Daredevil* run will boost the character's stock in this sort of territory no end) and *Arrow*, and challenge them for the urban vigilante crown. *Arrow* especially is on a mission to deconstruct some of the sillier characters of comic-bookdom and transform them into credible opponents, such as Count Vertigo's make-under as a drug dealer.

This is the kind of toned-down tactic Goddard will need to employ if he's to have any hope of drawing from *Daredevil*'s 40-year-plus backlog of villains that includes Manuel Eloganto, a spurned matador with a vendetta against mankind, not just bulls. Obviously, fans want to see Elektra and Bullseye – both huge parts of the angst-ridden Miller era of the character – and they should get them eventually, but *Daredevil*'s nemesis should always be the Kingpin, Wilson Fisk – a man-mountain crime boss who can't be punched out of the equation, offering up threats and challenges to sustain *Daredevil* across an entire 13-episode run.

It's an exciting prospect: a previously mistreated Marvel creation that has a real shot at sustaining a TV show in a world where the property rights to some of the company's most popular – and most soap operatic – characters are scattered among various film studios. And with obvious choices like X-Men and Spider-Man – just as popular now as they were where Marvel first licensed them – ruled out, *Daredevil* makes a solid alternative. He's got the parent issues, relationship troubles and identity crises that makes for top-notch drama, but he's not without pitfalls. One potential issue Marvel may encounter is that many of *Daredevil*'s villains – Kingpin among them – have their origins in *Spider-Man* lore. ➤



*Iron Fist: Living Weapon* is ongoing from Marvel and is available digitally through Comixology.

"AGENTS OF SHIELD HAS FOUND ITS STRIDE AND REALLY BECOME MORE LIKE A COMIC-BOOK"

CLARK GREGG





# STAYING ALIVE

Agents Of SHIELD's Phil Coulson on fan expectations, his comic-book bucket list and being in Joss Whedon's inner circle

INTERVIEW JONATHAN HATFULL

**F**rom the Avengers' band manager to *Agents Of SHIELD*'s frontman, Clark Gregg's Agent Phil Coulson has been the unflappable, unbreakable heart of the Marvel Universe. With Marvel's *Agents Of SHIELD* responding to its critics and Coulson realising that the organisation might not be the band of white hats that he thought they were, we talked to Gregg about how the show is hitting its stride and why there's nowhere else he'd rather be.

**Coulson has always been cool, calm and collected. Have you enjoyed shaking him up a bit?**

Yes, it was certainly fun in the movies to be the guy who didn't seem to be that fazed, even by the giant metallic death creature in the middle of the Arizona desert, as if he'd seen three of those that week. But as an actor it's more fun and challenging to kind of have your world and basic existence questioned, of what you're doing alive torn to pieces and try to keep it together in that regard.

**Do you feel like the show has found its groove now? There seemed to be this weight of expectation when it aired.**

It does to us, certainly. Despite the fact that Joss and everybody else said "Let's be really clear, this isn't about Tony Stark and his friends; these are the small, flawed humans who are day-to-day agents in this giant agency," there was some expectation that it might be something more superhuman. At the same time it's kind of found its stride and really become more like a comic-book. This stuff that's coming up is very exciting, and it's very frustrating to have to wait because the stuff that we've done feels to

me like the fullest representation of what we're going for.

**Coulson loves Cap. Could you pick a favourite Avenger?**

When Joss said, "You have a big part in *The Avengers*," I was thrilled and it made sense, he was the guy in the green room – since you're English I'll say at Glastonbury – fetching all the rock star divas, each of them he has a different relationship with. There's a real connection, perhaps not without antipathy, with Tony Stark just because that's where Coulson was born and that's the first guy he got to know. I feel like the weird uncle who gets to babysit sometimes, they're all my children, you know? There's one kind of relationship with Cap that's just a man crush that dares not speak its name! On the other hand, walking onto the helicarrier for a scene with Bruce Banner, Agent Romanoff, Clint Barton, Tony Stark, Thor... I didn't know who was going to have a heart attack first, Phil Coulson or Clark Gregg.

**It must be great to see Coulson in the comic-book canon?**

Yes, that's one of the ones that was on my bucket list! I've been reading this run of *Deadpool* that Phil Coulson has showed up in, and it's one of the greatest things that's ever happened to me. *Deadpool* was flying Lola and I was, "OK, just kill me now."

**Is there a Marvel character that you'd want to appear in *Agents Of SHIELD*?**

I certainly have my comic-book lover's fantasy of someone like *Deadpool*, *Warlock* or *Iron Fist* to come visit, but what I love about the show is

the stuff that really explores the cost of being a guardian of our small galaxy without any superpowers. So I think the dream thing for me would be to kind of have these field agents, Sam, Romanoff, Barton, Maria Hill, have them there for an episode that connects to what's going on with *SHIELD* in the Marvel world or Budapest, the traumatising mission that Clint and Natasha talk about.

**With *The Avengers* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, how does it feel to be a part of the Joss Whedon universe?**

It's another 'pinch me' thing. I was a fan of Joss before I met him, when he came up to me backstage before the *Thor* panel at San Diego Comic-Con to tell me that he wanted to introduce me as part of the Avengers – I'm still surprised that I survived it. He wrote me the greatest stuff that anybody has written me – I guess with the exception of William Shakespeare in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Hopefully he'll take another break after *The Avengers 2* and we'll do *Twelfth Night*.







The colourful and crazy current *Daredevil* run couldn't be a bigger departure from the Frank Miller era that Netflix might draw on.

➤ While 20th Century Fox – who produced the Bat-fleck film – and Sony – who hold the Spidey rights – came to an understanding about the use of the character in 2005, Disney's protectionist attitude and hunger to regain their wayward franchises won't have gone unnoticed. Why should Sony compromise with a company who are on record as wanting to bring the *Spider-Man* brand back in house?

It's nothing they haven't faced before, though, with *Mutant X* being a prime example. The original 2001 show was created by Arad and executive produced by Ungar and followed a team of all-new mutants with extraordinary powers, but 20th Century Fox went straight to the courts. Fox had exclusive rights to the X-Men, and claimed *Mutant X* was being marketed as a replacement, forcing Marvel to tone down the X-imagery and mutant angle. Despite being on the wrong side of the summons, the series ran for three seasons, and was a rare example of a live-action Marvel show that actually got off the ground. There were plenty that didn't get past the pitch stage, however, including Marvel mainstays Power Pack and Thor, as well as more obscure characters like Bloodstone, Night Thrasher and Brother Voodoo, while seat-squirmingly naff

**"WE'VE FINALLY HIT A POINT WHERE THE VALUE OF LIVE-ACTION TELEVISION VERSIONS ARE CATCHING ON"**  
RICK UNGAR




pilots/TV movies exist for the likes of *Nick Fury: Agent Of SHIELD* and *Generation X*.

Ungar reveals what the process was like back when Arad was president of Marvel Films, Marvel chief creative officer and Marvel Studios chairman and CEO: "He always played a big part, and we would talk about what could work," he says. "The other thing that always comes into play is what complications would you have with the major characters that are with other film studios? In other words, if you've made a deal with a motion picture studio to do a picture as a movie, there's tie-ups on the television rights, so that has something to do with it. Plus, you have to wait until everything aligns correctly, and that's when shows tend to happen."

**IT WAS AS IF THEY WERE A TOY FACTORY THAT NEEDED TO FIND A SHOP TO STOCK THE GOODS. WITHOUT A NETWORK OF THEIR OWN, CONCEPTS NEEDED TO BE LICENSED**

out to other broadcasters, and live-action superheroics were a tough sell. Animation, on the other hand, was a big success, with *Spider-Man* and *X-Men* among them becoming a sensation in the early-to-mid Nineties thanks to the arrival of Fox Kids and Arad and Ungar's passionate early beachhead. "Animation's always easiest when you're dealing with superhero stuff,"

says Ungar. "Live action's always a lot more expensive, so that was part of it – that, and the timing was right. Fox was willing to do five-day-a-week kids' stuff when nobody was really doing that except for syndicators in the US. In those days, things were predicated on the US – that's less true today. You had an opportunity to do five days a week, which drives much bigger numbers. All that kind of came together with the *X-Men* cartoon."

These days, Marvel owns both the metaphorical toy factory and the toy shop. Disney can air animated content on the XD channel; family orientated, Whedon-flavoured fare on ABC, and now, because they're willing to take that unexpected risk in order to get the most out of some of their most cult characters, the upcoming made-for-Netflix projects, which amount to endless opportunities for television output. If Ungar was at Marvel now, he would be fully backing this development: "It certainly is a great idea; my favourite shows right now all seem to be on Netflix and made for that network. I think they're in a position to really push the envelope – they don't have to worry about television standards and practices. They can do exactly what they want to do." 

*Agents Of SHIELD* Season One is currently airing on Channel 4.





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WORDS JAMIE GRAHAM

# CIRCUIT BREAKER

HOW CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S RIGHT-HAND MAN WENT SOLO WITH SF THRILLER **TRANSCENDENCE**





Christopher Nolan collaborator Wally Pfister is breaking out of his role as cinematographer to take the lead on *Transcendence*, a tense cyberpunk thriller starring Johnny Depp and Morgan Freeman. We caught up with the first-time director for an incredible one-on-one...

**B**ACK IN THE EARLY NINETIES, A CHICAGO-BORN CINEMATOGRAPHER NAMED WALLY PFISTER SHOT A RASH OF EROTIC THRILLERS WITH SUCH SALACIOUS TITLES AS *ANIMAL INSTINCTS*, *INSIDE OUT* AND *SECRET GAMES*.

Now, he's directing Johnny Depp in a \$100 million sci-fi blockbuster that mulls over the knotty theme of artificial intelligence. That's some journey.

"It's all good, man!" laughs the 53-year-old Pfister, dressed in jeans and a horizontally striped T-shirt as he sprawls out in London's Charlotte Street Hotel. Relaxed and gregarious, Pfister laughs a lot – an infectious bellow that fills the room. "I went to Hollywood as a documentary filmmaker," he explains. "You'll shoot anything that comes your way. I did horror movies, erotic thrillers – all these things. And I actually learned lighting on all these movies. I was honing my skills. I didn't care about the content." He sits forward. "I

didn't get noticed by Chris Nolan until I did a small independent film called *The Hi-Line* (1999). That had some substance to it, and suddenly my work was much better because there was an emotional stake to it, even as a photographer."

Ah, Christopher Nolan, who *Transcendence* would never have happened without. And not just because Pfister has acted as director of photography on each of Nolan's films since 2000's *Memento*, marshalling images beautiful and dynamic that have entered the public consciousness. No, it was Nolan (and his partner in life and work, Emma Thomas) who signed on to *Transcendence* as executive producer to help convince the studio to sign over a huge budget to a first-time director, and it was Nolan who assured Pfister that he could handle the gig, saying, "Storytelling is the same, whether it's \$100 million or \$10 million."

"Chris is a good friend and a good mentor," Pfister says. "He's a great artist and a fantastic storyteller, but he's a very efficient filmmaker too. He's made his films so cleverly. I'm so fortunate to have been on those sets for 15 years, watching this master work. I'm hoping I've taken the lessons."

*Transcendence* is the story of Dr Will Caster (Johnny Depp in blazer and tortoiseshell spectacles), a brilliant scientist who's working towards creating a machine that possesses sentience and collective intelligence. The goal is to "save lives" and fashion a "better future", Caster tells wife/co-worker Evelyn (Rebecca Hall) and their colleague Max (Paul Bettany), for its "analytical power will be greater than the collective intelligence of every person born in the history of the world." But the dream seems to be over when Caster is gunned down by anti-technology militants – at least until the mad scientist, ➤





## BIG MOVIE

Transcendence

Johnny Depp as *Transcendence*'s ill-fated scientist, Dr Will Caster.

➤ on his death bed, convinces Evelyn and Max to upload his brain into a machine. Think an upgraded RoboCop without the hassles of the suit and freed from the confines of Detroit. Once Caster's untethered brain is online, this shit goes global.

Of course, Hollywood films about hurtling advances in technology rarely end well, and for every Robby the Robot we get ten warnings as to the perils of artificial intelligence in movies such as *Metropolis*, *Tron*, *Blade Runner*, *The Terminator* and many, many more. It's almost inevitable, then, that Caster's consciousness turns power crazy and embarks on a rip-roaring rampage that threatens mankind with extinction.

Pfister grins. "I got the screenplay from my agent, read it, liked it, but wanted to make some changes to it," he says, casting his mind back to early 2012. "I approached Chris and Emma about being involved in it, and I made the choice to take it to this company Alcon [Entertainment], who produced one of Chris's movies, *Insomnia*. Then we put it together, found a budget for it and went out to actors."

Whatever the budget was planned at originally, it received a sizeable bump when Depp showed an

interest. The actor was reportedly offered \$20 million versus 15 per cent of the film's gross, although Pfister understandably chooses to talk creative decisions rather than financial ones. "It was really serendipity that Johnny signed on to the project," he says. "It was through his agent. His agent said, 'What about Johnny?' I was like, 'Are you kidding? I'd *kill* to have Johnny in this movie.' Johnny read it, and liked the script. We spent a couple of months talking about it before he made the final decision. He had very clear ideas, fantastic ideas. They really improved the movie in terms of what his character was doing and the overall theme of the movie. Once Johnny's on, everything else falls into place. He's a very bankable actor." Depp, for his part, said, "Wally is a creative and intelligent artist, who I feel will bring great depth to the character and overall narrative."

Considering that Depp was rumoured to be playing the Riddler in *The Dark Knight Rises* for so long, there's a certain poetry to his taking the lead in *Transcendence*, but it's also a sensible choice. Apart from being bankable, Depp can also be counted on to bring curveball energy to a project and add humanity.



## FLAWS OF ROBOTICS

How artificial intelligence has gone awry over time



**GORT**  
THE DAY THE EARTH  
STOOD STILL

**Purpose:** To act as Klaatu's muscle when warning humanity not to bring its war-

mongering ways into space.  
**May:** React badly to threats and attempt to destroy humanity.

1951



**HAL-9000**  
(2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY)

**Purpose:** To ensure the continued survival and comfort of astronauts David Bowman and

Gary Lockwood.

**May:** Go insane and murder the ship's crew, requiring immediate disconnection.

1968



**THERMOSTELLAR  
BOMB #20**  
(DARK STAR)

**Purpose:** One of Dark Star's intelligent bombs that possesses reason and language.

**May:** Be taught Cartesian doubt, decide its sole purpose is to explode, and do just that.

1974



**ASH**  
(ALIEN)

**Purpose:** Weyland-Yutani's androids can integrate with the crew and offer assistance, and are unable to harm a living human.

**May:** Malfunction and harm humans, particularly if they've been told that the crew is expendable.

1979





The latter was especially important given *Transcendence's* focus on tech and its promise of boasting advanced intelligence as it weighs up the old benevolence-versus-malevolence argument of AI. This, after all, is a film that some industry insiders have compared to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, albeit with more explosions (some have also grunted "*The Lawnmower Man*", but we won't go there).

"Absolutely," nods Pfister, warming to the theme of Depp's, well, warmth. "Johnny's likeability comes off in the first five minutes of the picture. Women like him, men like him, everyone likes him. He's an incredibly charismatic man. People grab onto that." The director, it seems, also grabbed onto it, welcoming the actor's input and happily allowing him to suggest tweaks and add layers of nuance. "He's a really smart guy, very well read, so he had a real understanding of what this character should be and what's going on," explains Pfister. "He understood the emotional journey. Johnny brought depth to it. Let's call him Johnny Depth!"

**N**ATURALLY, ONCE DEPP SIGNED ON, EVERYTHING ELSE FELL INTO PLACE. AS WELL AS THE AFOREMENTIONED HALL AND BETTANY – THE FORMER CHARGED WITH MAPPING THE FILM'S "EMOTIONAL JOURNEY", AND THE LATTER ACTING as "our narrator" – the principal cast includes Nolan stalwarts Morgan Freeman and Cillian Murphy. 'It' girl Kate Mara, so attention-grabbing as Zoe Barnes

communication with actors," he says. "Knowing how to communicate with a performer to get the nuances I was looking for. I think that was the most fun I'd ever experienced. But it was definitely a learning process for me. I took tips from Morgan. He'd whisper in my ear, 'Try saying this...'"

Throughout the interview, Pfister, however genial, is at visible pains to stress why he wanted to direct, his furrowed brow interrupting his grins and laughs as he suddenly gets serious. You can't blame him; being an ace cameraman who's renowned for crisp and, some would say, chilled visuals, it's inevitable that he should face assumptions that *Transcendence* will favour form over content. But

looking good, he insists, was the last item on his agenda. First and foremost came the actors, characters, ideas, story and heart.

"They were the *only* reason I wanted to do it," he stresses. "I'm not going to say I had no interest in lighting and camera (Pfister insisted *Transcendence* be shot on 35mm, preferring film stock to digital), but that wasn't the ➤

## "I ALWAYS WANT AUDIENCES TO BE QUESTIONING WHAT THEY'RE SEEING, TO HAVE A TOUGH TIME TAKING A SIDE"

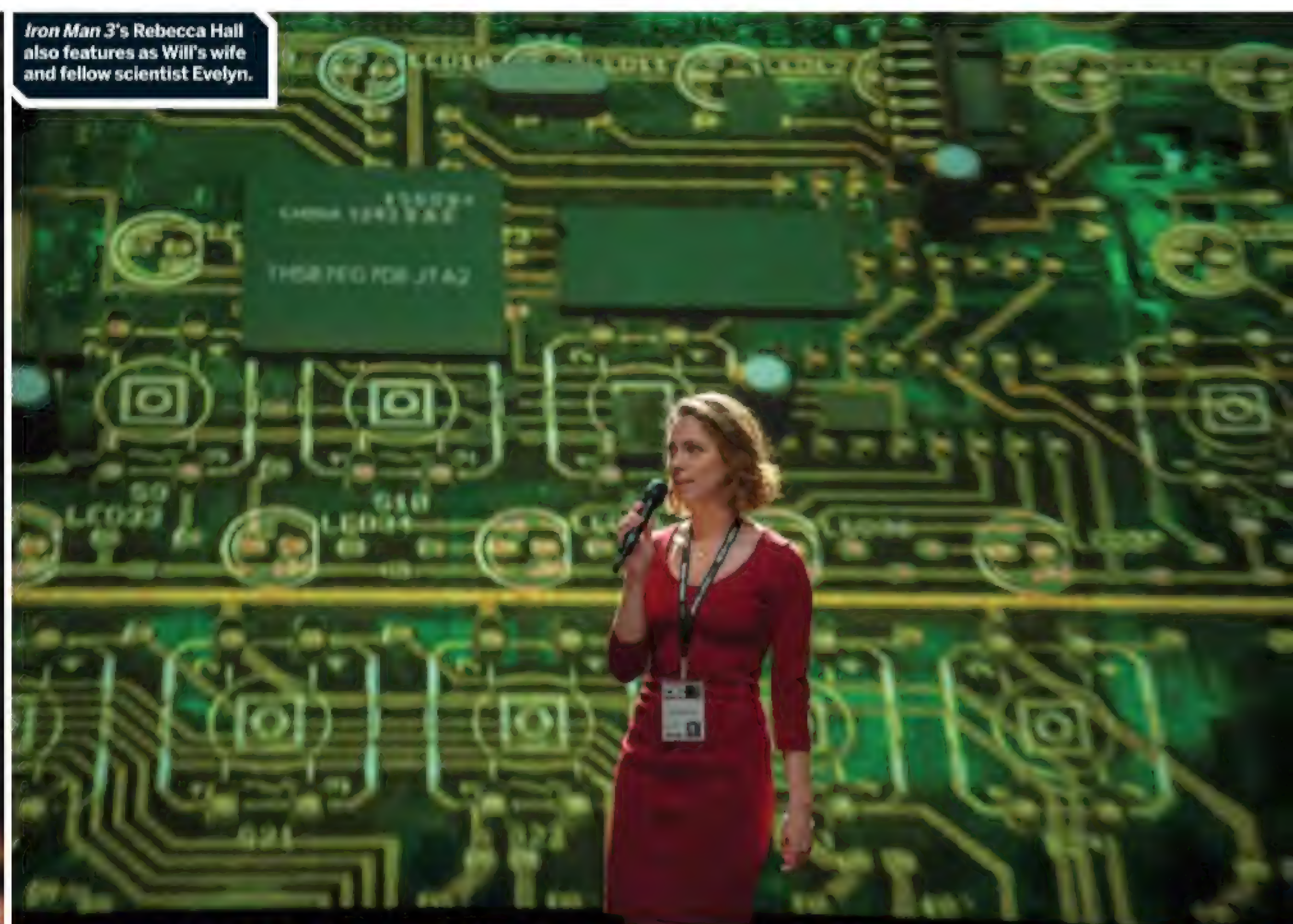
WALLY PFISTER

in *House Of Cards* and Hayden McClaine in *American Horror Story*, rounds out an impressive ensemble. Rather than be intimidated by the standard of the players seeking his direction, however, Pfister embraced the challenge.

"It's definitely one of the skills I had to learn, but it was the most important thing to me, after the screenplay – the



*Iron Man 3's* Rebecca Hall also features as Will's wife and fellow scientist Evelyn.



### TRON (TRON)

**Purpose:** A security programme designed by Kevin Flynn for the ENCOM mainframe and resemble his friend Alan.

**May:** Side with Flynn when he's sucked into the mainframe to fight the dastardly Dillinger and the Master Control Program.

1982



### SKYNET (THE TERMINATOR (1984))

**Purpose:** Cyberdyne's military defence system removes human error and packs a faster

reaction time.

**May:** Decide that humanity is the real threat and initiate a nuclear holocaust.

1984



### THE BORG (STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION)

**Purpose:** The Borg are the Collective. They will assimilate all they come across into the

Hive mind in their pursuit of perfection

**May:** Assimilate your captain and provide the spin-off with its high point.

1987



### CYLONS (BATTLESTAR GALACTICA)

**Purpose:** Originally built as robot slaves, the Cylons are now committed to the extermination of humanity.

**May:** Attempt to understand humanity and begin a lengthy quest for religious enlightenment.

2003





# BIG MOVIE

Transcendence

⇒ exploration that I wanted to focus on. That came naturally. But if we'd shot the movie in a dark box and it was just about performances, I'd be satisfied." Working closely with his actors was a process he enjoyed immensely, as was the experience of orchestrating hundreds of people on a vast movie set. It's one thing calling the shots as a cinematographer, and quite another as a director.

He smiles wryly. "The most intimidating thing for a first-time director is being on that set and being in charge and having to make all the big decisions," he remembers. "Having all those people coming up to you with just one question after another. You've got 300 people asking you questions all day long. Luckily, I had a great taste of that as a cinematographer – you're managing 50 to 100 people every day. My set skills were honed, so I wasn't intimidated. I was very adept at keeping to schedule and budget, and I'd directed a lot of commercials. But it's scary, watching the hours slip away and trying to keep the machine on schedule."

He succeeded, the New Mexico and California shoot running smoothly between late April and late July of 2013. Pfister revelled in acting as the epicentre to 250 New Mexican crew members and 2,400 New Mexican background and principal players, never quite believing his long-cherished dream to haul megaphone had come to fruition in such a big way.

"I always wanted to direct," he says, eyes shining. "When I was a kid, I always thought I'd become a film director. Then... I'm not going to say I got sidetracked, because I enjoy photography quite a bit, but I got into that and worked with a great filmmaker, and that kept me happy and satisfied. By the time I'd won the Oscar [in 2011 for *Inception*], I became more reflective. I came to the conclusion that 'If I'm gonna direct, I better do it now!'"

**"I WOULDN'T COMPARE MYSELF TO CHRISTOPHER NOLAN – I HAVEN'T PROVED MYSELF YET"**

WALLY PFISTER

Not that it was easy to get Hollywood to play their part in making his dreams come true. "Because of my record, I had a certain amount of branding, so people were receptive – there was enough interest to be able to get some screenplays coming my way," he begins. "But look, it's always an uphill battle.

The irony of my career as a cinematographer is that you do small films, and it's a battle to do a big movie; and then you get a big movie, and they question your ability to do an independent film!" He laughs. "So you constantly have to reinvent and prove yourself. You have to be relentless and grab on to that [clutches the bottom of trouser leg and repeatedly yanks at it] with your dog teeth and just hang on while that leg is shaking you off and smacking your ass against the wall. You hang on and you push back against ideas you know are wrong. You push back to make the movie that you want to make. And then you hope to hell that people will go and see it!"

For Wally Pfister, the chance to direct his first feature was too good to pass up.



## THE CYBERPUNK RULES

How three decades of head-jacks and mirror shades brought us to *Transcendence*



### BLADE RUNNER (1982)

01 With implanted memories and a neon-lit city of perpetual rain, Ridley Scott's vision of the future is one of the genre's most pivotal touchstones.

### NEUROMANCER (1984)

02 William Gibson's futuristic noir pitched its augmented hero into a hack heist. While it's not the first cyberpunk novel, it did popularise the genre.

### AKIRA (1988)

03 Katsuhiro Otomo delivered a dizzying vision of a near-future Tokyo. Features bike chases, amphetamines and a truly brilliant body horror finale.

### HARDWARE (1990)

04 Richard Stanley's lo-fi sci-fi is set in a post-nuclear wasteland, where Dylan McDermott finds pieces of a killer robot MARK-13, which promptly reactivates.

### GHOST IN THE SHELL (1995)

05 Cyborg Motoko hunts a hacker known as the Puppet Master and questions her own identity.

### STRANGE DAYS (1995)

06 Starred Ralph Fiennes as the sleazy Lenny, whose plans for the end of the century are scuppered when the memories he sells include a brutal murder.

### THE MATRIX (1999)

07 The Wachowskis blended future noir with groundbreaking action sequences.

### TRANSCENDENCE (2014)

08 Wally Pfister's debut packs some classic cyberpunk themes, most notably the fear of what technology could do in the wrong hands.





# TRANSCENDENCE

Circuit Breaker



**ABOVE LEFT:** Pfister with Hall and fellow stars Cillian Murphy and Morgan Freeman.  
**ABOVE RIGHT:** Caster's journey functions as a cautionary tale of discovery.  
**BELOW RIGHT:** Paul Bettany as Will's friend and co-worker, Max.  
**BELOW LEFT:** Depp admitted to looking forward to working with Pfister.



**IF CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S SIGNATURE BRAND OF BUSTING BLOCKS IS ANYTHING TO GO BY, TRANSCENDENCE, WHICH APPEARS TO OFFER A SIMILAR BLEND OF ACUMEN AND ACTION, SHOULDN'T HAVE TOO MUCH TO WORRY ABOUT. NOLAN,**

after all, is renowned as the man who mixes brains and brawn to bring about critical and commercial smashes. Who else but him would use the heft of his all-conquering *Dark Knight* movies to make a personal project spun around a mind-frazzling high concept (a heist movie set inside the subconscious) and sporting a title, *Inception*, sure to get punters reaching for the dictionary, and yet somehow deliver Leonardo DiCaprio, a spectacle you can only dream of and \$825 million at the box office?

Can *Transcendence* pull off the same trick? It's having a go, the latter stages of the trailer accentuating things that go boom after the first half has introduced the *big idea*. "It's about technological singularity," states Pfister. "I wouldn't say it's about the fear of it, but it's an exploration. I like to think there's a cautionary tale: 'Get out of technology what you want to get out of it, and not what they want you to get out of it. Be wary of technology overly complicating things, and our dependency on it.'"

"I always want audiences to be questioning what they're seeing, to have a tough time taking a side. That's what's of most importance to me, that there's ambiguity, in the spirit of these Seventies films."

And the action? What is the deal with those extraordinary visuals of objects elevating into the air and dark liquids seeping out of the desert to whoosh skywards? "I can't [go into that] without spoiling it, but needless to say this machine gets more powerful, the stakes get higher, and it gets more controlling. We're exploring themes of nano-technology and a highly advanced intelligence creating something that can build on particulate matters."

One thing's for sure: the threat is global. "Yeah, that's fair to say. And yeah, there are action sequences, but the action sequences are the logical conclusion of what we've explored in the earlier stages of the film. There had to be enough action to make sense of the film and give it gravitas that a larger production has, but we didn't want to be gratuitous. It had to serve the story." Pfister pauses. "I wouldn't compare myself to Chris. He's an accomplished filmmaker, I'm a first-timer. I haven't proved myself yet

beyond the trailer, beyond studio folk having seen it and actors getting behind it. But it's really about the viewing public. I'll let the critics and audiences decide."

On that rather fitting note, the interview draws to a close. But not before one final question, the most important question of all; Not 'how close is the idea of sentinel machines to reality?' (although Pfister's thoughts are: "Well, clearly there's a 'fi' in the 'sci-fi', so we take artistic license and push it to its logical extreme. But the notion of uploading a human brain? I'd say we're very close to that. That's something people have been experimenting with. It's something that's likely to happen"). No, it's: what does Nolan think of the *Animal Instincts* trilogy? Surely that's how Pfister's rise to blockbuster ascendancy began, with arguably the planet's most powerful filmmaker watching some handsomely lit soft porn? Pfister blurts out one last laugh, the biggest yet. "I don't think Chris ever saw my erotic thrillers!" he says. "Well, until later on, when he was flipping the channels." He grins. "He said, 'Well, the lighting was good!'"

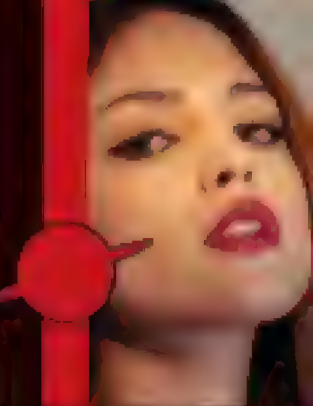
*Transcendence* will be released in cinemas on 25 April.



**MUST-SEE TV**  
From Dusk Till Dawn







# HIGHWAY TO HELL

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ AND THE CAST OF NETFLIX'S BRAND NEW BLOOD-DRENCHED TV REBOOT OF FROM DUSK TILL DAWN TELL SCIFINOW ABOUT REVAMPING THE CULT CLASSIC FOR A NEW GENERATION...

WORDS

JONATHAN HATFULL

INTERVIEWS

SARAH DOBBS

“EVERYBODY BE COOL,” ORDERS SETH GECKO, MAKING HIS POINT AT GUNPOINT IN THE FIRST EPISODE OF ROBERT RODRIGUEZ’S FROM DUSK TILL DAWN. “YOU... BE COOL.” IF IT’S AN INSTRUCTION THAT SOUNDS FAMILIAR, IT’S BECAUSE

George Clooney uttered the Quentin Tarantino-scripted line back in the 1996 cult classic as the Gecko brothers attempt to make it out of a liquor store without gunning down everyone inside. It’s just one of the elements that Rodriguez has recreated for his new revamped vision. The filmmaker has never been shy about establishing a brand, and he’s always known a good thing when he’s seen it.

*From Dusk Till Dawn* isn’t just Rodriguez’s first move into TV; it’s his first show for his own network, El Rey. How do you attract new viewers? You give the people what they want. “For our first show I wanted a show that would call attention to the network,” the *Sin City* director tells SciFiNow. “And so I thought it’d be better to do a show that people knew the name of, that they would be curious about, and *From Dusk*

*Till Dawn* was always a fan favourite. It’s the one that people come up to us – Quentin and I – all the time and say, ‘We love *From Dusk Till Dawn*’. For 18 years they’ve told us that.”

With its quotable dialogue, buckets of blood and memorable locations (It’s tough to forget an establishment named The Titty Twister), *From Dusk Till Dawn* the movie has earned its place in B-movie history. It’s endured both a sub-par sequel and a prequel, so you’d be forgiven for seeing the move into TV territory as cynical. However, we’re now living in a world in which both Norman Bates and Hannibal Lecter are enjoying a reinvigorating renaissance on the small screen, and Rodriguez explains that there’s plenty of road left for the Gecko boys to travel.

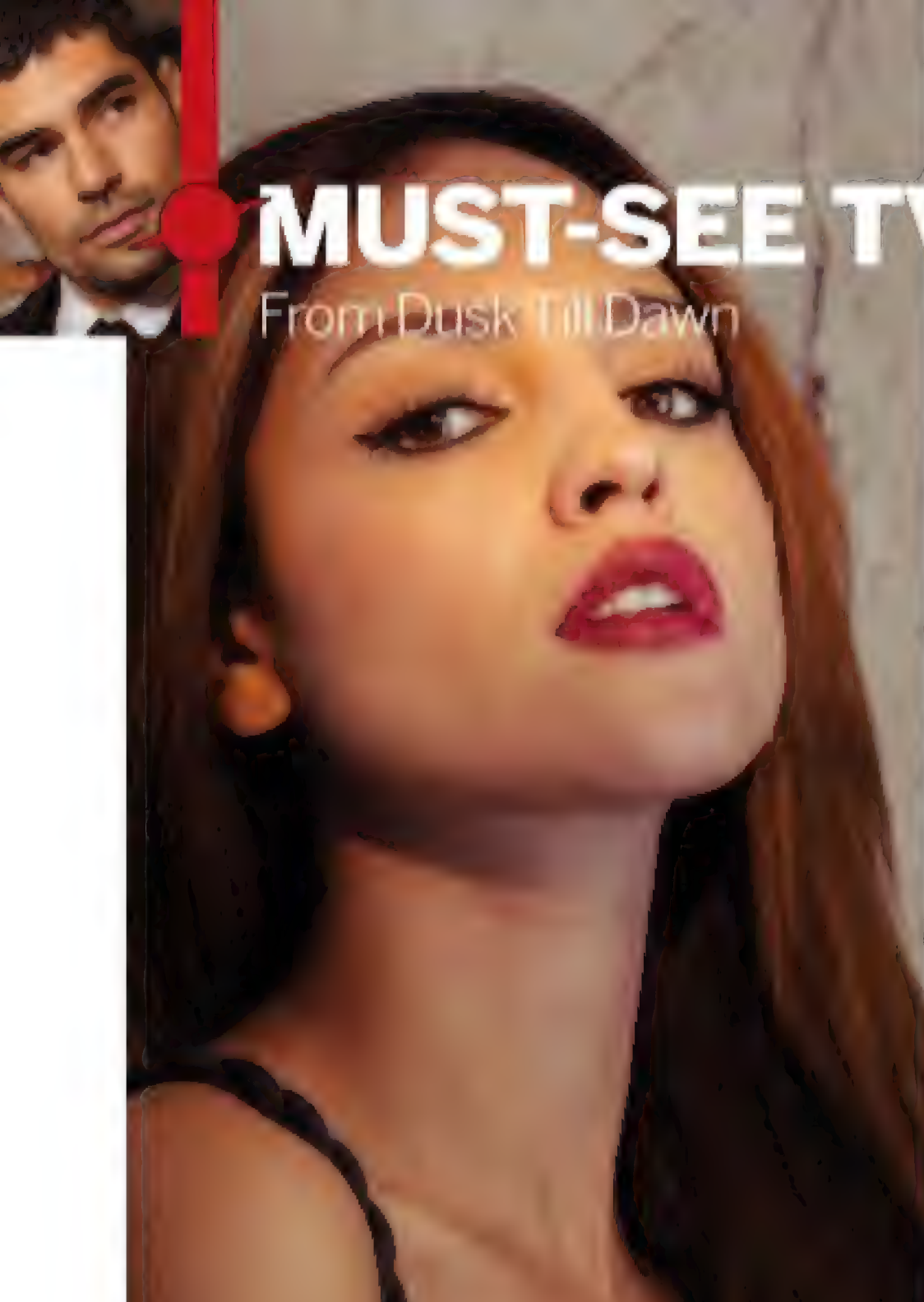
“It has a lot of story left untold because it’s one of Quentin’s shortest scripts, and Quentin writes the best characters, but his characters have never been on television,” he enthuses. “I thought this would be a great thing, for the first time I would do TV also, for

us to do a show that has those characters and retell the original story to utilise those characters for future seasons, so we had to retell it in a different way, so pretty quickly it turns into a different story because we have to set up for Seasons Two, Three and Four.”

The series begins where the film did, in a roadside liquor store destined to become a burned-out slaughterhouse with Seth (DJ Cotrona) and Richie Gecko (Zane Holtz) on the lam. However, although the series will be walking the same path as the film, there’s a lot of opportunity for more character exploration, and a point will occur when the series and the show go their own ways.

“Any time you see something that you love so much and there’s another version of it, you think, ‘This is not what I’m comfortable with, I don’t like this,’” sympathises Cotrona, who has the task of recreating George Clooney’s superhuman coolness. “But the great thing about the show is that we expand the back story, and moving forward, about halfway through the





## MUST-SEE TV

From Dusk Till Dawn

### SEXY LIKE A DINOSAUR

Eiza González on *Santanico Pandemonium*

**What can you tell us about this version of *Santanico*?**

It's not just the typical character who's just the sidekick of the guys; that tends to happen a lot in action movies. This character gets to be the evil one, the dark side of the story, and she manipulates everything around her to get what she wants from everyone. So you'll get to see how she's so powerful and beautiful, but she gets to transform into this ugly, terrible monster. It's not even a vampire; it's way more than that.

**What's your favourite thing that you've shot for the show?**

I loved doing the snake dance, it was amazing. It was very awesome for me because I got to face this nervousness because it's such an iconic scene, so I was really eager to start doing that scene. So that was one of my favourite scenes, because I conquered my fear of snakes, and now I love them and understand them. Now, whenever they're on set I'm hanging out around them and hanging them on my body and everyone's like, "Control yourself, you're becoming *Santanico*." So that was an awesome fear to conquer.

**How was vamping out?**

When I get to turn into the monster I go through four hours of make-up to become this scary monster, and that really excites me because I just completely transform and become rough, violent and aggressive. All my movements are so rough and tough, and it feels awesome to go from being very sensual and sexual and like this powerful woman, and then I feel like a dinosaur moving, the movements are so rough. I really enjoy being able to play so much, and being this powerful woman. Robert always does this, he gets the woman and is inspired by them, and he definitely makes you feel as powerful as the guys. Maybe the guys are running around killing people with guns, but as the girl you feel as powerful as them, because I get to be a bad girl and run the show and run everyone how I want.



Rodriguez says that the story from the original film is ripe for expansion.



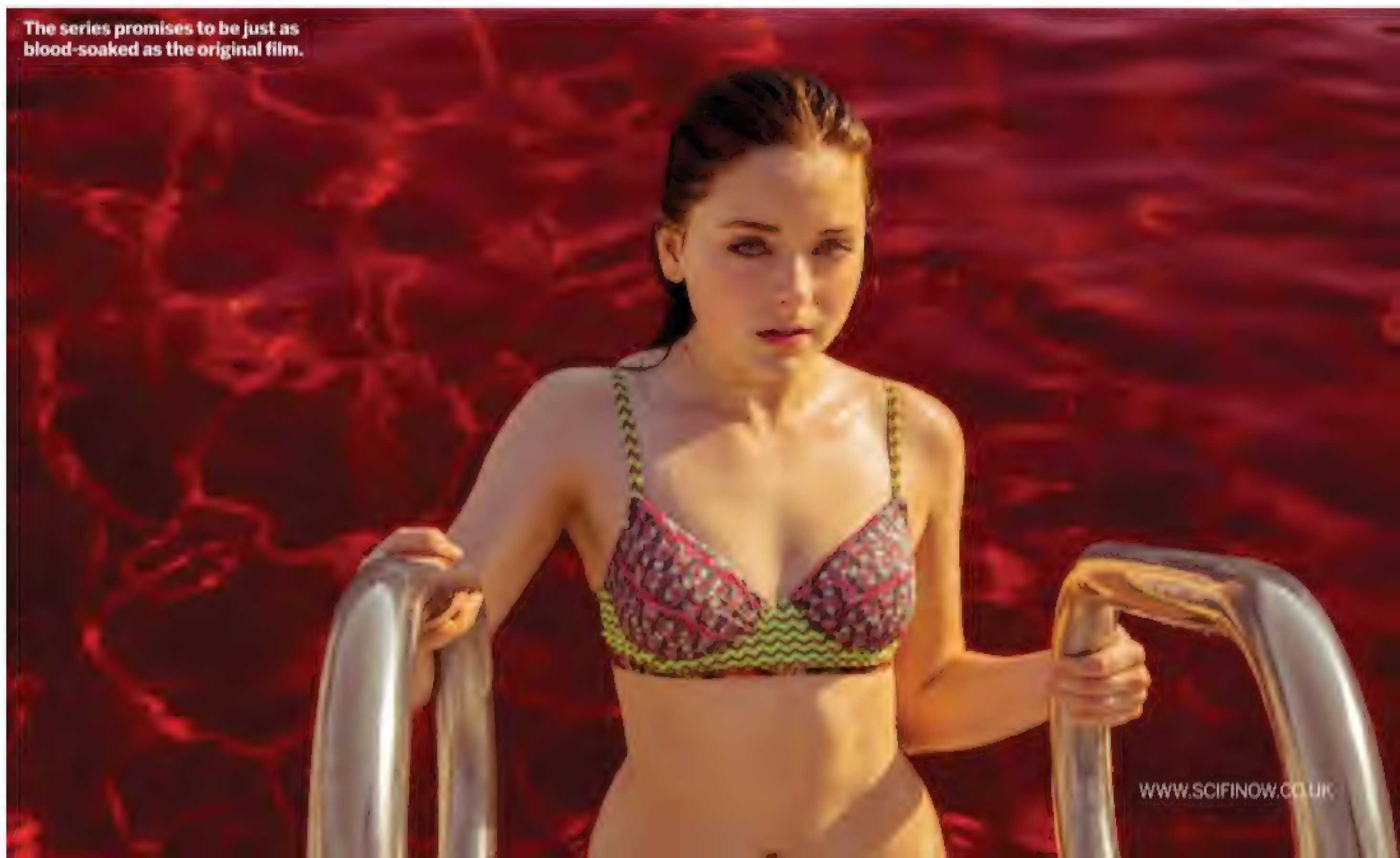
DJ Cotrona and Zane Holtz assume the roles of the Gecko brothers, Seth and Richie.



Robert Patrick takes on Harvey Keitel's role as conflicted preacher Jacob Fuller.



The series promises to be just as blood-soaked as the original film.

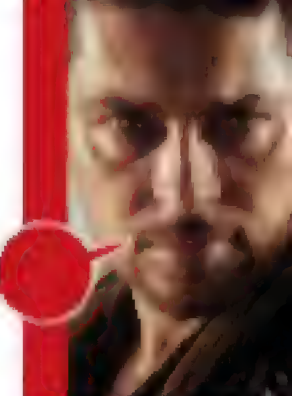






# FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

Highway To Hell



➤ season, we entirely become our own thing and move well past the film, so I just hope that people will keep an open mind. If you're a fan of Robert's and a fan of Quentin's characters and this world, then this is an opportunity for you to live in it as an audience for a much longer time, and I hope people enjoy it. It very much explodes from where we find these guys in the pilot to an entirely different new world, and it explodes into new storylines and new characters, and goes much, much further."

Indeed, although the series begins where the film starts, Zane Holtz (who has the slightly less challenging task of giving a better performance than Tarantino) tells us that Rodriguez's starting point for the series was actually the movie's final shot. "I think the biggest thing for Robert is that there's that final frame in the film where it shows that Aztec temple, and that was so inspiring to him that he wanted to come back and retell the story, but really materialise that whole mythology and get deeper into that pre-Mayan, Mesoamerican culture and really weave that into the show, and that becomes a really large part of the storytelling and an explanation for the creatures."

"It has the Titty Twister that's so iconic in the movie, and the Big Kahuna Burger and all those little moments from the movie," elaborates Eiza González, who picks up Salma Hayek's snake as fanged dancer Santánico Pandemonium. "But I feel like this story develops in a more interesting way than the sequels of the movie did. It goes deeper into the supernatural side of it."

Ah, the supernatural side. The shocking shift in the film's second half, as the doors of the Titty Twister close and the gates of Hell open, is a gloriously orchestrated piece of action horror, and Cotrona tells us that fans of the movie shouldn't expect any less blood and guts. "I feel like the past decade of the horror genre has been really watered down to the point where we have monster love stories, and in my opinion it's getting pretty ridiculous," he bemoans. "We're finally putting it back where it's supposed to be. Horror is supposed to be horrifying and terrifying, and that's what we're doing here. Greg Nicotero, who did the original effects on the film and is now one of the producers on *The Walking Dead*, he's doing all this stuff for us, and it's fantastic because it's really scary. There will be blood."

As for the vampires themselves, it seems as though we can expect something a bit different. "I wouldn't even call them vampires," explains González. "They're so much more. It's not just a typical show on an average network where it's like 'Oh hi, I'm a vampire, and I have two fangs and I'm beautiful,' you know? It has the Robert Rodriguez trademark on it."

The Rodriguez trademark is what could ensure that *From Dusk Till Dawn* stands out from the current crop of "based on a movie" series. He's a writer/director/editor/composer/caterer...

"I directed four of those [episodes], I edited all of them, and we're shooting here in my studio just about every day, so I'm very hands-on," he laughs. "I even shot the posters! I tell people I do everything but turn

the TV on for you" He has been one of the industry's most prolific filmmakers since he first subjected himself to medical trials to raise money for debut feature *El Mariachi*, abandoning Hollywood to create his own movie studio in Texas. He's more than just a filmmaker; he's a one-man industry. "He's the do-all guy, do-it-yourself" enthuses Holtz. "Everything with this show is exactly the way he wants it, even though we have other directors coming in there's still this brand that we're trying to maintain. It's definitely Robert's world."

"I'm just too naïve to know you're not supposed to do all that stuff," laughs Rodriguez. "I just go do things that I'm interested in, and it works out. I like to build things, I like to work for myself, and you have a lot more freedom. Artists love freedom, that's why we're able to attract great casts and people to come and work here; because they have complete freedom to just create."

It's hard to imagine an independent filmmaker enjoying the same complete freedom when making the jump from film to TV, but then most of them don't own the network. In fact, the transition makes a lot of sense when you

consider the way Rodriguez works: fast, and on digital. "Well, I'd always heard TV was faster, so I was a little nervous at first because I shoot really fast on my films, so I thought 'Oh my gosh, how much faster are we going to have to move?'" he remembers. "But then I came down and we did the first couple of episodes, and I realised, 'I've been shooting at TV pace all this time.' And the show, I think people will be surprised to find, looks just like film. There's no difference, it's really high quality. It really looks strong, it's just that how we shoot in Austin is

different from how they shoot in Hollywood."

His commitment to speed and determination to be at the forefront of the industry's technological advances are two of his defining characteristics as a filmmaker, so it made perfect sense when Netflix announced that they had picked up *From Dusk Till Dawn* for distribution, making it available in the US, UK and many other territories the day after it airs on El Rey. "It seems like there's usually a big break in time between airing in the States and coming to other territories," muses Holtz, "but we've gone from, 'OK, we're gonna be on El Rey, it's really great' – and now all of a sudden it's gonna be worldwide immediately, it's very exciting."

Unlike other Netflix Originals, however, *From Dusk Till Dawn* will proceed at a once-a-week pace. With TV increasingly resembling films, it's hard to think of any filmmaker who would find the format more rewarding. "It's an ongoing process which is really nice if you like telling stories," explains Rodriguez. "And I like telling stories over a long period, that's why I tend to do a lot of sequels. I've done three franchises, because once you

create a character, you want to see more of that character, not just one film, so I make sequel after sequel. Television allows me, basically, to make a lot of sequels." ☞

*From Dusk Till Dawn: The Series* is available now on Netflix.

**HORROR IS SUPPOSED TO BE HORRIFYING AND TERRIFYING AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE**  
DJ COTRONA

## ROCKY ROAD

It's never worth taking the scenic route

### THE HITCHER

C Thomas Howell makes a big mistake when he picks up Rutger Hauer's hitchhiking psychopath. Things don't work out very well for Jennifer Jason Leigh's unlucky waitress, either.

### THE HILLS HAVE EYES

Breakdowns don't come more catastrophic than the Carter family's crash in the Nevada desert. Papa Jupiter and his clan are welcoming in the worst way.

### JEOPERS CREEPERS

Justin Long and Gina Phillips pay the price for taking the scenic route when they are attacked by a flying creature with a predilection for eyeballs and golden oldies.

### WOLF CREEK

Touring the great wilderness of the Australian Outback became a different proposition after seeing John Jarratt's Mick Taylor torment three hapless young backpackers.

### JOY RIDE

Paul Walker, Steve Zahn and Leelee Sobieski get more than they bargained for when they tease a lonely trucker on their CB radio.







## INTERVIEW

Michael Cera

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

# Mind Games

HOW **MICHAEL CERA** WENT FROM PLAYING AWKWARD SUBURBAN TEENS AND DAY-GLO GEEK ICON SCOTT PILGRIM TO PULLING APART JUNO TEMPLE'S SANITY IN GRUELLING PSYCHOLOGICAL HORROR **MAGIC MAGIC...**

**T**here's an old Hollywood rule that says if an actor can do comedy, they can do anything. From Bill Murray in *Lost In Translation* to Jim Carrey in *The Truman Show*, there's a grand tradition of funny men and women who turned to drama with great results. With arthouse horror *Magic Magic*, Michael Cera is taking a step away from his comic persona, and the best point of comparison might be Robin Williams' deeply creepy performance as a repressed stalker in *One Hour Photo*.

*Magic Magic* sees Cera play Brink, a young American living in Chile who is instantly smitten by fellow compatriot Alicia (Juno Temple). Alicia is there to hang out with her friend Sara (Emily Browning), but when Sara is forced to return to the city she is left in a remote cabin with three people she doesn't know. As she struggles to remain calm, Brink's behaviour gets stranger and more aggressive. Is Alicia being paranoid, or is Brink trying to force her into a nervous breakdown?

"It's fun to play such an extreme and grotesque kind of character," Cera tells us. Brink is a fascinating creation; a young American with clear boundary issues who has been in Chile so long that he's adopted the accent. He's friendly, but aggressively so. He's funny, but his jokes all seem pointed. It's the kind of character that you can see a Hollywood casting agent never considering Cera for in a million years. He's *Arrested Development*'s George Michael and *Juno*'s Paulie Bleeker (who no one thought was even capable of impregnating the young fertile Myrtle). The idea of Scott Pilgrim as a creepy potential predator is a bit of a leap.

So it comes as no surprise to learn that *Magic Magic* was a passion project for Cera, the result of years of development and a friendship with Chilean writer/director Sebastián Silva. If it felt like Cera dropped off the map somewhat following *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World*,

it's because he was down in Chile, working with Silva on two low-budget movies: the hugely charming road trip comedy *Crystal Fairy & The Magical Cactus* and, of course, *Magic Magic*. Although the former was released first, it was the latter which cemented Cera's relationship with the writer/director.

"It came about because I was a big fan of his movie *The Maid* that he made a few years ago," Cera explains. "I wanted to make contact, and he was in Los Angeles and I didn't know much about him at the time – I didn't know if he spoke English, I didn't know anything. But we had a really good first meeting, and became friends pretty instantly and planned to make a movie together some day. We kept in touch, and he thought of the idea for this character."

With dark hair, a strange, almost sing-song voice and a physicality that shifts between twitchy and languorous, Cera completely disappears into the role of Brink. Although he's keen to stress that the character is as much Silva's creation as his, Cera admits to having had a hand in his development. "It was quite a lot on the page, and Sebastián had a pretty fully formed idea of him, I would say," he tells us. "But I was spending a lot of time in Chile, because I went down to learn Spanish, and almost ➤



MICHAEL CERA  
Mind Games



“IT’S FUN TO  
PLAY SUCH A  
GROTESQUE KIND  
OF CHARACTER  
MICHAEL CERA”

WWW.PDFMAGAZINES.ORG





# INTERVIEW

Michael Cera

➤ every day something would be a little inspiration to the character, some little thing, so we slowly started adding ideas to him."

One of the most threatening things about Brink is that the nature of his interest in Alicia is never made clear. The film is presented to us through her eyes, and this strange, intense man is constantly poking and prodding at her, desperate to provoke a reaction. As good as Cera is, Temple matches him every step of the way with a performance that makes it clear – if it wasn't already – that her star is very much on the rise. "Yeah, well, that's all very much in the script," Cera remembers of the strange push and pull between their two characters. "We all got together and discussed the movie a week or two before we went into production. That all was pretty intuitive, pretty clear. Juno and I knew each other already too, so there was already a lot of trust there, which I think helps for such a strange dynamic."

**T**HAT STRANGE DYNAMIC IS A BIG PART OF THE INTENSELY CLAUSTROPHOBIC AND UNEASY ATMOSPHERE THAT SILVA CREATES. WE'RE USED TO HEARING STORIES ABOUT ACTORS STAYING RIGIDLY IN CHARACTER FOR SUCH DARK ROLES, BUT IT'S OBVIOUS THAT CERA

revelled in playing a character as bizarre as Brink. "I didn't find it challenging; it was fun," he enthuses. "It was really fun to do scenes like that. I mean, watching Juno do these scenes where she had to do a panic attack for the entire day, that's really tiring. But doing the character was fun."

Although the story of *Magic Magic* is relatively uneventful in terms of major incidents, the tension ratchets up quickly. Silva gets tremendous performances out of his cast, and it's clear that they relished the experience of working with him. "This might just be the kind of movies I've worked on, but as an actor you're sort of a liability at all times," laughs Cera. "This was different; we were sort of treated like members of the crew – 'Of course you have to be here, we can't do the scene without you, so you have to be there!' – I found the way Sebastián treated actors was a little bit different than anybody else I worked with. He really speaks to you like a collaborator and doesn't hold your hand as much as some directors might. I think a lot of directors are very worried about actors and maintaining actors' emotions, and Sebastián truly gave you more credit than that."

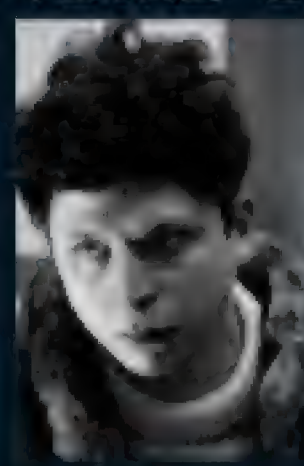
The production itself may have gone very smoothly, but Cera is happy to tell us that finding the money to actually make the film wasn't anywhere near as easy. He has an executive producer credit on the film, the kind of credit that can often be used to stroke the ego of an actor who feels he was a bigger part of the process than simply appearing on screen. Cera, however, characteristically plays down his involvement in that area.

"I don't know, I was more or less willing it to happen," he demurs. "I showed up in Santiago before we had funding, before it was a sure

## MICHAEL CERA AND THE ULTIMATE CAREER

The Scott Pilgrim star's big battle for box office success

### VITAL STATISTICS



Born: 1988  
Nationality: Canadian  
Typecast as: Awkward but adorable teens  
Biggest hits: *Juno*, *Superbad*  
Biggest flop: *Scott Pilgrim*  
Biggest question: When is *Arrested Development* coming back?

### GHOSTS

**Typecasting**  
Another script about an adorable young guy!

**Competitiveness**  
Jonah Hill has been nominated for an Oscar twice!

**Bad Studio Projects**  
Year One seemed like a good idea!

**Box Office Losses**  
Why couldn't *Scott Pilgrim* fans have seen it at the cinema?

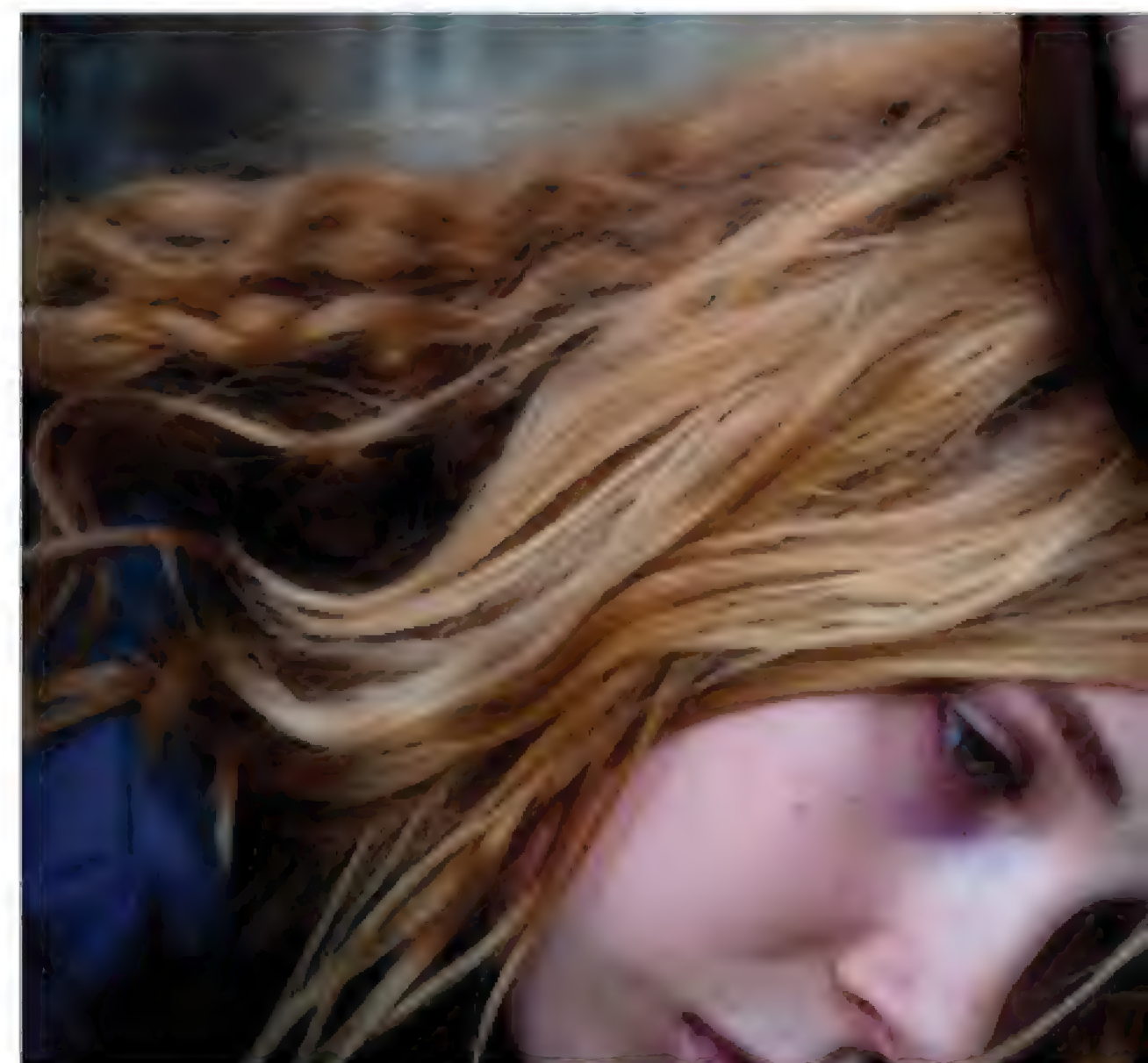
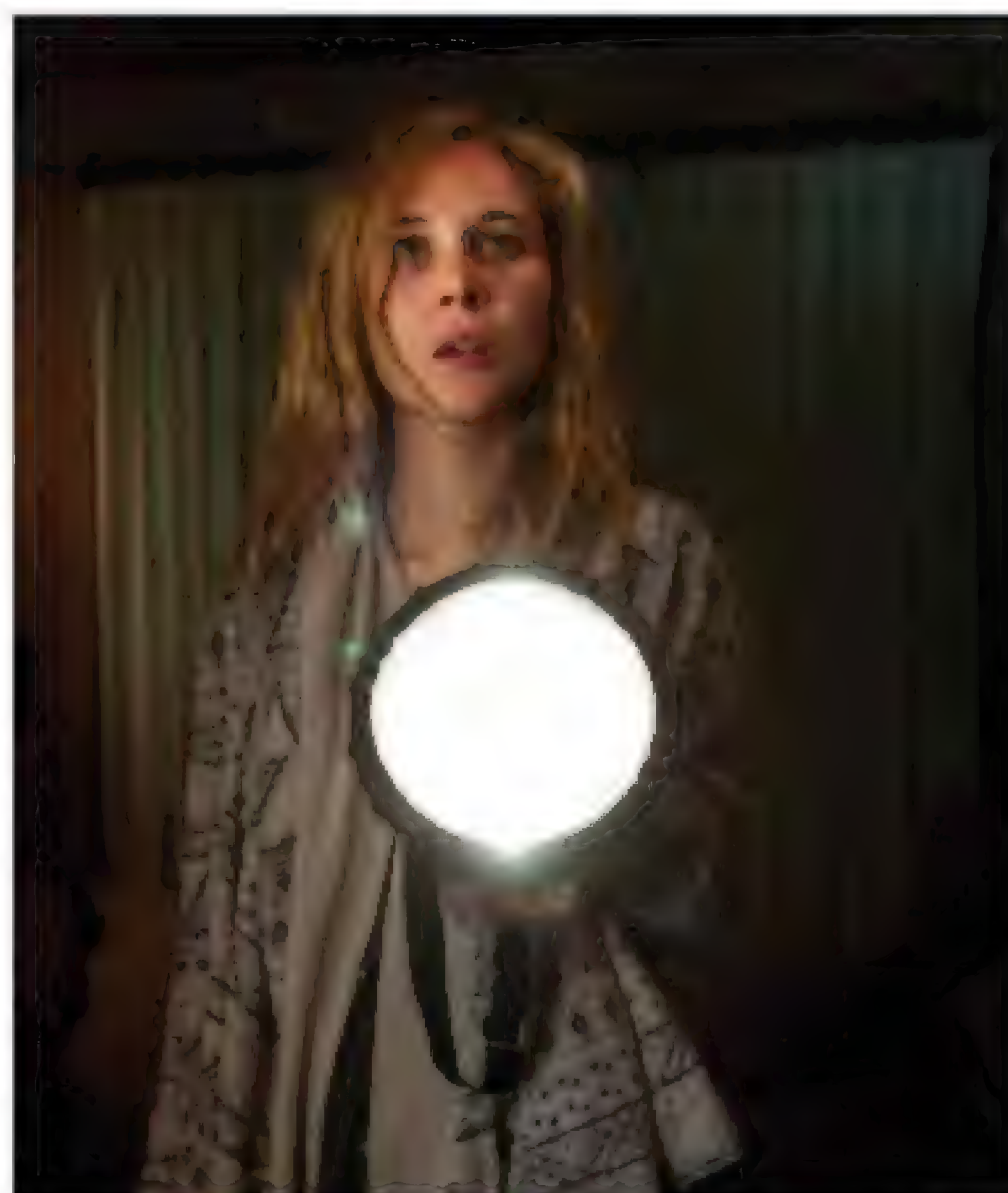
### COINS

**Artistic Integrity**  
You make the films you want to make!

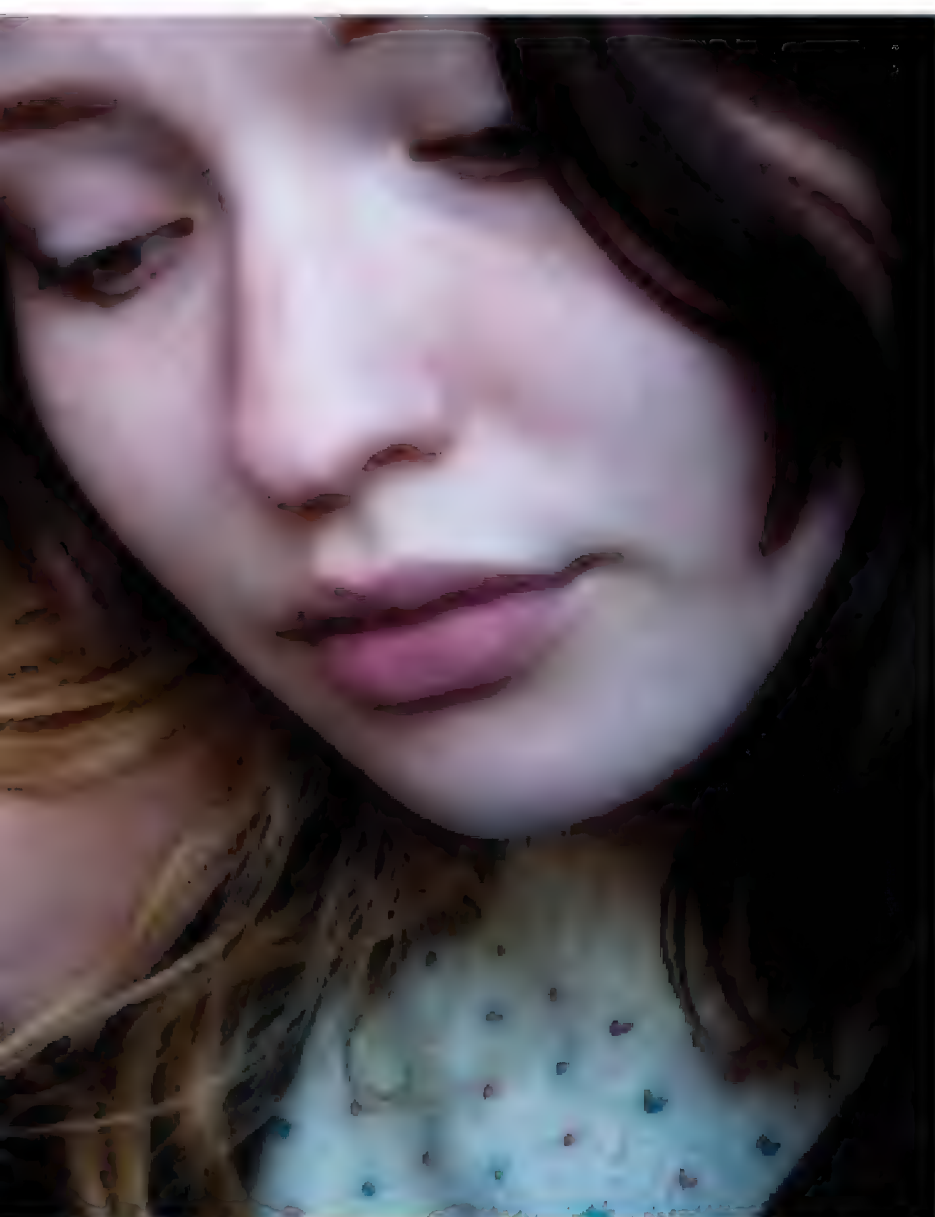
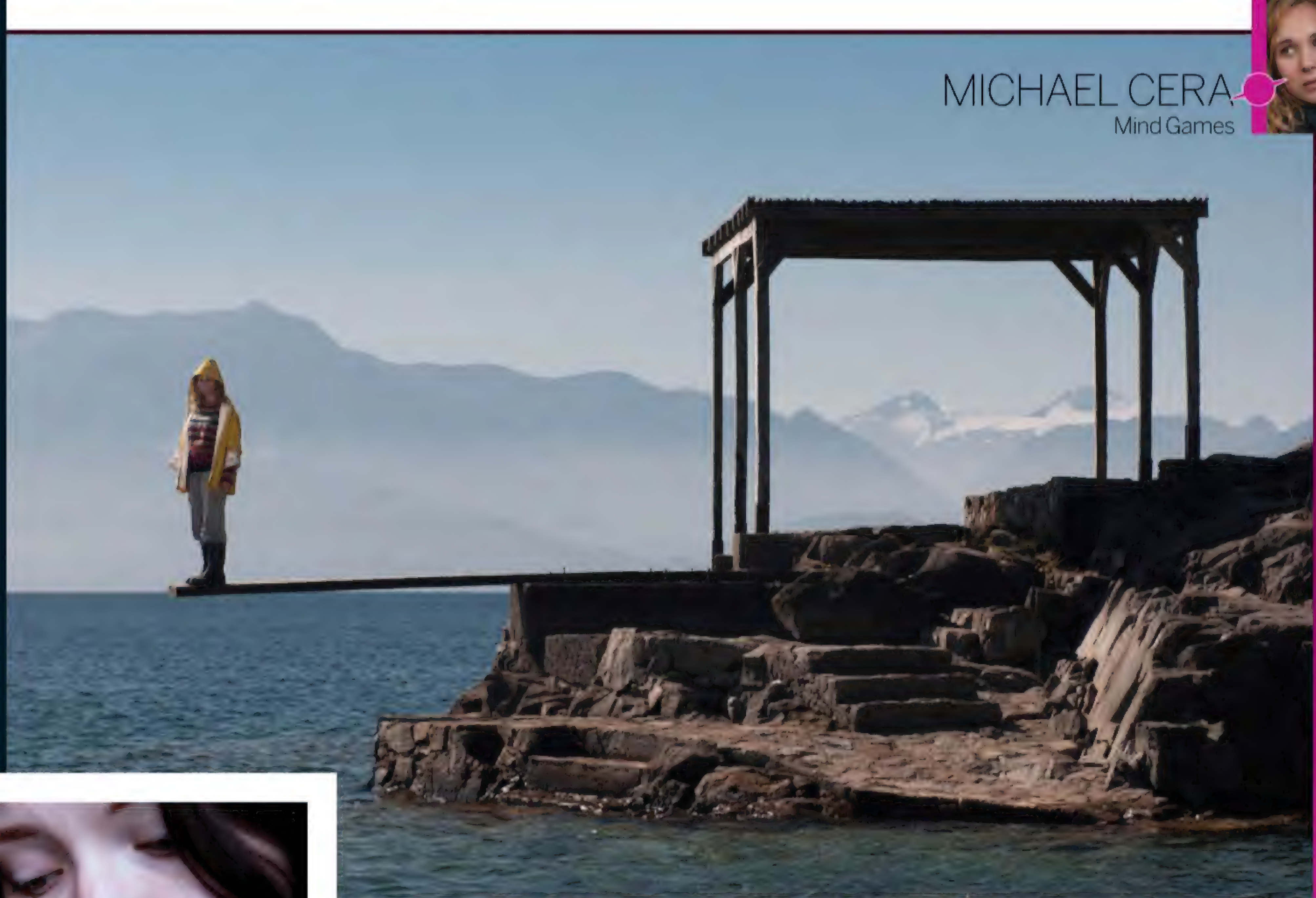
**Self-Parody**  
*This Is The End* was hilarious!

**Arrested Development**  
It's the show that never gets old!

**Breaking Type**  
Play a creepy weirdo in a low-budget Chilean horror!







thing. I was hoping that my being there would energise it and just finalise it. Then nothing really happened for a while, and then by the time I'd left it looked like we weren't going to make the movie – we'd kind of lost hope. That's why we did *Crystal Fairy*, just not to end on such a sad note, because me and Sebastián were hoping to do something together. I guess just being there, you know, willing it to happen."

Thankfully, Cera and Silva were able to return to *Magic Magic* after *Crystal Fairy*, resulting in a pair of movies that feel strangely like a pair, despite their obvious differences. Cera's performance in *Crystal Fairy* is far more overtly comic – a twitchy, oblivious tourist desperate to sample a local hallucinogenic drug. The film itself is considerably more laid-back than *Magic Magic*, but both have a strong sense of personality. "I think they're both very different," Cera opines. "They both have the kind of same fun spirit that all of Sebastián's movies have, just because he's inspiring and really a fun filmmaker. But they were really different in terms of productions, because on *Crystal Fairy* we had a very, very small budget and like a ten-person crew. This film was more of a full-blown production."

The term 'full-blown production' is relative, however. With a small cast and crew on location in Chile, the elaborate set pieces of *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* must have felt very far away. "*Scott Pilgrim* was a really great experience for me," enthuses Cera. "Everyone loved doing that, but doing those kind of jobs where you're working with so many people and you're doing it for six months... It's a very different experience. On this kind of movie you're a little more collaborative

than on something where it just costs so much to make. This was a more artistically involving experience, I would say."

*Magic Magic* did the festival rounds with *Crystal Fairy*, and both films appeared at Sundance in the same year. In the world of the wider release, however, it's the dark and moody *Magic Magic* that's a harder sell. It's psychological horror, but that's not exactly the easiest thing to get across on a poster. "I think that's sort of mixed representation," says Cera. "I don't know why that is, I guess it's

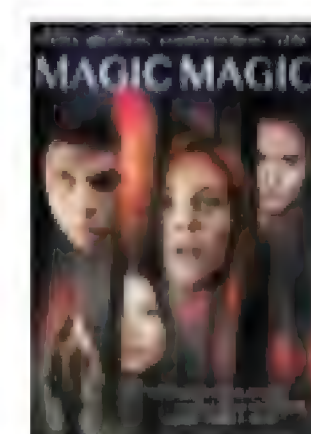
because it's really a difficult movie to sell. It's a pretty polarising movie and it's not for everyone. I really love it personally, but I think Sebastián was really influenced by Roman Polanski, and took a page from Polanski's book in terms of the mood of this movie and sort of unidentifiable characters that it has, and that alone is unsettling. It's hard to really say that on a DVD cover, I don't know how I would do

**"PEOPLE LIKE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE FEELING AND WHEN THEY CAN'T IT CAN BE UNSETTLING"**

**MICHAEL CERA**

it! People like to understand what they're supposed to be feeling, and that can be unsettling."

As hard as it is to sell, however, *Magic Magic* will find its audience. It's atmospheric, darkly funny and claustrophobic, and it does that truly rare thing: it keeps the viewer guessing. "I would love it if anyone finds either of these movies and sees them, I would be delighted,"



concludes Cera. "I'm proud of both of them. I think Sebastián has made very interesting films, and I think he'll continue making really interesting films. I'm really proud of everyone's work, I think people will somehow find them." ☺

*Magic Magic* will be released in cinemas on 18 April.



WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

# SCARE IN THE COMMUNITY

**SCIFINOW GOES ON THE SET OF IN THE FLESH TO TALK TO THE CAST AND CREW ABOUT HOW THE ZOMBIE DRAMA BECAME AN ONLINE SENSATION AND WHAT WE CAN EXPECT FROM SERIES TWO...**

**A**s SciFiNow stares into the eerie, cracked eyes of a zombie, a rich, full range of emotions runs its course. There's the excitement of something being crossed off our bucket list combined with an undeniable sense of unease. The effect is slightly ruined by the grins on the faces of the soulful undead, as cast members Emily Bevan and Emmett Scanlan are all too aware of the effect their contacts are having on the lifelong genre fan in front of them. "They do tie the look together, and it's intimidating to look at, I assume," Scanlan laughs. He's not wrong.

The reason for coming face to face with the walking dead outside a former Boy Scout centre in Salford is that we're on set for the eagerly anticipated second series of Dominic Mitchell's zombie drama *In The Flesh*, and the cast are more excited about the prospect of getting their lenses out than devouring people. "It's the simple pleasures during the day, it's a real highlight when you get an eye drop!" laughs Bevan. "You know, you've got to get your kicks where you can."

Set in a Britain recovering from an undead uprising and attempting to rehabilitate the risen, the three-part series was one of last year's best surprises, delivering wit, social commentary and heart. The reception was overwhelmingly positive, particularly online, as younger viewers identified with the struggle of PDS (Partially Deceased Syndrome) sufferer Kieren (Luke Newberry) to reintegrate into the small, prejudiced town of Roarton and a family that no longer understood him.

"[I was] a bit taken aback, really," says Newberry, who's slightly less intimidating than his colleagues with his character's cover-up make-up on. "It really reached the people that I think it was hoping to reach, a lot of people were really affected by it, and that's really heartening, to get messages from people saying, 'The character really inspired me' or 'I can relate to this.' When it's such a high-concept thing, for it to speak to people on a very human level is great."

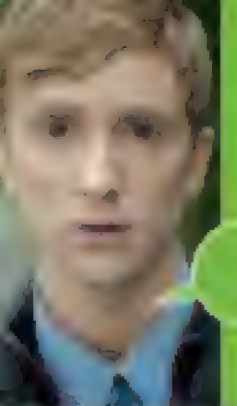
"Yeah, I hope that we kept that," agrees Mitchell. "Especially with Kieren's journey. He's not feeling very proud of who he is, not feeling proud at all. Without his cover-up and his contacts in, he can't look at himself in the mirror. So it's still really intimate domestic stories, but we just happen to be in a post-apocalyptic zombie world." ➤



**FLESHED OUT**  
LUKE NEWBERRY AS KIEREN WALKER

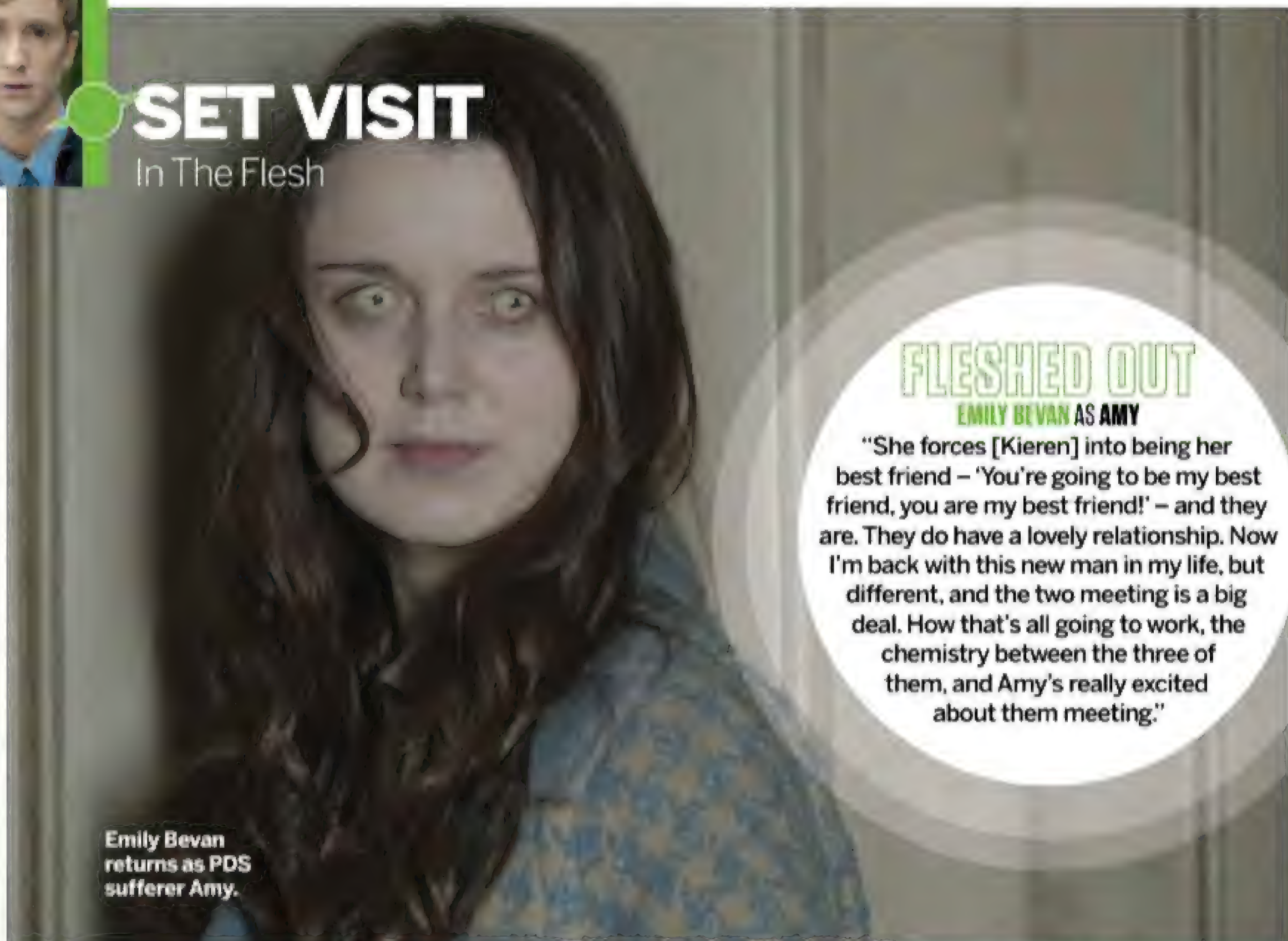
"He's faced with this open life that doesn't really have a sell-by date on it. He's going to be young forever, and until someone shoots him in the back of the head that's it. What do you do with no time limit, how do you spend your time? So he's got all these things going on, and these new people coming in, making life even harder: he just feels completely trapped by everything."





# SET VISIT

In The Flesh



Emily Bevan returns as PDS sufferer Amy.

## FLESHED OUT

EMILY BEVAN AS AMY

"She forces [Kieren] into being her best friend – 'You're going to be my best friend, you are my best friend!' – and they are. They do have a lovely relationship. Now I'm back with this new man in my life, but different, and the two meeting is a big deal. How that's all going to work, the chemistry between the three of them, and Amy's really excited about them meeting."

➤ Mitchell's kitchen-sink zombie drama captured the imagination of its target audience, and the BBC acknowledged that, commissioning an extended second series of six episodes. The series finale appeared to give Kieren some closure, while leaving room for further exploration of the post-Rising world. He's found some level of acceptance, but what now? We get a chance to chat to Newberry in a break from shooting a scene in which he's told that, as a PDS sufferer, his passport is no longer valid.

"So nine months on, he's got itchy feet and he just wants out," the actor explains. "He's got all these ideas about travelling abroad. He just wants to start again and be somewhere that understands him better, and he thinks that in Europe people are more tolerant, and generally more open and artistic as well, because he's an artist and he wants to go and express himself. Desperate to go to Paris!"

"He doesn't want to pull pints for the rest of his eternity!" adds Mitchell. "Series One sort of dealt with his past – we're dealing with his present, and how he feels about being partially deceased. He's still wearing the make-up, he's wearing the contacts all the time and he's pretending to be living. He's not really embracing that part of himself that is undead. He doesn't like to think of himself as partially deceased; he likes to think of himself as living."

**THIS QUESTION OF IDENTITY WAS A HUGE PART OF THE FIRST SERIES. KIEREN'S STRUGGLES AS A PDS SUFFERER WERE INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO THE PREJUDICE HE FACED FOR HIS SEXUALITY WHEN HE WAS ALIVE, AND HIS EVENTUAL DEPRESSION THAT LED TO HIS**

suicide. *In The Flesh's* determination to tackle these big themes and issues was what made it instantly stand out from the crowd, and the expanded second series will allow it to continue to do so.

"I suppose the first season is all about otherness, feeling other, being frightened of other and what happens when you don't accept who you are, and when you don't accept other people for who they are," says Bevan. "I think this second series is more about belief; belief in yourself, belief in other people, and belief in mythologies and what that makes you do under the name of belief and how you judge other people. But I think that theme of otherness will go all the way through with *In The Flesh*."

The clash of different belief systems and people's reactions to otherness were very confrontational and violent in the first series, with the Human Defence League using lethal force to terminate PDS sufferers. This year, there's a more insidious threat in the form of a new political party and local MP Maxine Martin (Wunmi Mosaku). "The relations

## Civil Bites

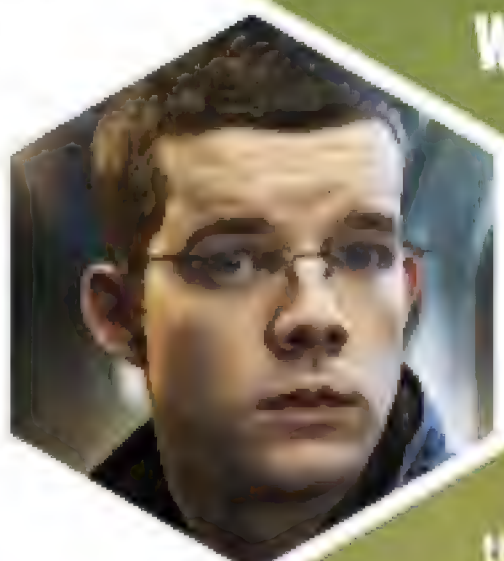
Everyday issues in supernatural form

### VAMPIRES (TRUE BLOOD)



Vampirism was used as an allegory for homosexuality in the HBO smash, with bigotry, segregation and oppression, not to mention an outrageous pastiche of the Christian Right.

### WEREWOLVES (BEING HUMAN)



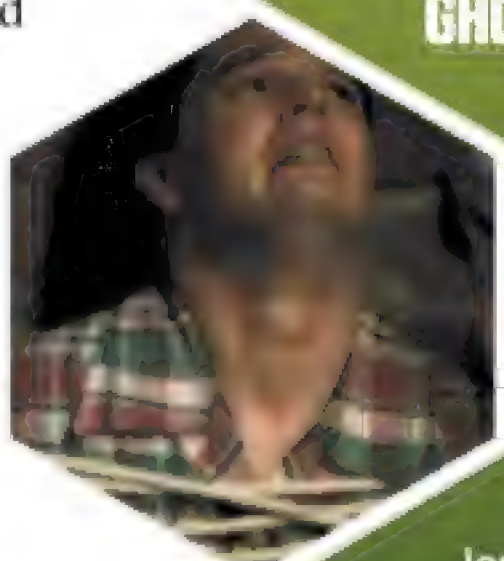
Toby Whithouse originally planned the series about a vampire, ghost and werewolf living together as a real-life drama, with the mild-mannered George suffering from anger-management issues rather than lycanthropy.

### ALIENS (ROSWELL)



Every teenager feels like they don't belong in their home town, and what better way to drive that point home than by making them aliens, as the Fox TV show did for three seasons.

### GHOSTS (ANGEL)



The Whedon-verse isn't exactly light on supernatural allegories, but the *Angel* episode 'Rm W/A Vu' uses Cordelia's ghostly new roommate as a metaphor for the loneliness of living in a big city.



## FLESHED OUT

EMMETT SCANLAN AS SIMON

"Simon felt like life was meaningless, that we were all just treading water waiting to die. He did a lot of drugs and he overdosed on heroin, and there's track marks up and down his arms. He was one of the first rabids that was caught and experimented on, and I think he met the Undead Prophet in rehabilitation. He's got scars from his first life, and even in his second life."

between the living and the undead are really, really on tenterhooks," Mitchell reveals. "There's a new political party called Victus, who are a one-issue party; they're anti-PDS. They say that they're for the living, but they're an extremist right-wing group, and they're passing laws and policies that are affecting the PDS community. Which, of course, means that the ULA, the Undead Liberation Army, are stepping up, they're combating these extremist policies."

The ULA and their unseen figurehead, the 'Undead Prophet', were one of the lingering threads from the end of the first series, as Amy left Roarton to track them down. "Amy was looking for something; she was looking for companionship, she was looking for meaning in her life, and looking for some kind of family," explains Bevan. "Amy was kind of cheering Kieren on and helped him accept who he was, and then Amy's spirit got a little bit trampled on. Finding her place among these other PDS sufferers in this commune has given her zing back, her orange zing! We're all about, 'This is who we are' and 'Why should we have to cover up for anyone? We shouldn't have to apologise, we're out and we're proud! We don't want to be made to feel embarrassed for who we are, we're au naturale and we won't have it any other way.'"

Amy hasn't returned to Roarton alone, having brought a fellow PDS sufferer with her, Simon (Emmett Scanlan), who looks to be the main figure of opposition to Victus' plans. "He's one of the 12 disciples



# IN THE FLESH

Scare In The Community



Battle lines will be drawn in Roarton in Series Two of *In The Flesh*.

## FLESHED OUT

WUNMI MOSAKU AS MAXINE MARTIN, MP

"Maxine is pro-life, so I suppose for her Roarton is quite strange because they're so accepting of PDS. They're trying start the 'PDS Give Back' scheme, getting all the PDS sufferers to work and pay back their debt to society. She's chosen a party that's pro-life because she doesn't necessarily agree with reintegrating them so completely into society."



The first series gained plaudits for its sensitive portrayal of its various themes.

of the Undead Prophet, and he's a firm believer in their ethos and their theory," Scanlan tells us. "In Simon's first life, he couldn't find any purpose for it. It's only in his risen state as a Partially Deceased Syndrome sufferer that he's now found meaning; he's found meaning in his dead state." Simon's liberated behaviour stands at odds with Kieren's more mild-mannered approach. "Kieren doesn't want to be reactive and make a scene," affirms Newberry. "I think Kieren wants to prove that... I know he's just an inch away from eating someone's brain, but he is on medication, and if you are medicated you're just a human being like everyone else. I think his way of doing that is by getting his head down and being as normal as possible rather than campaigning. That terrifies him."

**S**OW WITH RELIGION, FAITH, SELF-BELIEF AND DISCRIMINATION ALL BEING EXAMINED THROUGH THE LENS OF POST-APOCALYPTIC HORROR, IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE SHARP AND VIBRANT SPIRIT OF *IN THE FLESH* IS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE. AS WE MAKE OUR WAY AROUND THE SET, YOU

would never know it was a grim and wet day in November from the incredible atmosphere. All the cast and crew seem absolutely thrilled to be working on the show, and the air of excitement and enthusiasm is unmistakable. "I have this theory," enthuses Scanlan. "With zombies, [Mitchell has] pumped life into an otherwise tired genre. No actor really wants to be a zombie because it's not exactly something

"IT'S STILL REALLY INTIMATE DOMESTIC STORIES, BUT WE JUST HAPPEN TO BE IN A POST-APOCALYPTIC ZOMBIE WORLD"

DOMINIC MITCHELL

that would push you, artistically speaking. Every actor would want to be a vampire, and the reason is that vampires have got personality. What Dom does is he gives that personality back to the zombie, and therefore for the first time ever it's cool to be a zombie. It's a beautiful and unique spin on a well-used genre, and something that's so new and unique. That's something that you want to be a part of."

As the anticipation mounts for the return to Roarton and a world in which the dead are struggling to be accepted for who they are, it's clear that Mitchell understands why this bond with the fans is so strong, and why it's so important that it has to be maintained. "Even though it's a sci-fi show about zombies, there's a reality there, and it's being able to go, 'Oh yeah, my dad's like that,' or 'My mum's like that' or 'I feel like that,' 'I feel other and I feel a bit different from everyone else,'" he explains. "I think that's what really connects with the fans. We weren't afraid to be emotional and have a lot of humanity in it. We want to make the characters as real as possible, and it really connected with a lot of people because a lot of people feel like they don't connect. Hopefully, we've done that with Series Two as well, and protected the humanity of it. It's about human beings – or half-human beings – trying to make their way in the world; trying to live." ☺

*In The Flesh* returns to BBC3 on 4 May.



**SET VISIT**  
Bates Motel

**I HAVE  
STAYED  
REASONABLY  
SANE**

**FREDDIE HIGHMORE**





WORDS STEVE NASH

# DREAD & BREAKFAST

WE BOOK A ROOM FOR A NIGHT IN HORROR'S MOST NOTORIOUS MOTEL AND PEER BEHIND THE CURTAINS AND BEHIND THE SCENES FOR BATES MOTEL SEASON TWO

**E**ACH TO THEIR OWN, BUT THERE IS SOMETHING ODD – CREEPY, EVEN – ABOUT TAXIDERMY. HAVING A HOBBY THAT INVOLVES BEING SURROUNDED BY ANIMAL CORPSES all day isn't exactly a conventional pastime. But standing in the taxidermy studio of a certain Norman Bates dials the creepiness level up to around 11, and that's where SciFiNow is on a rainy November day, just outside Vancouver, on the set of *Bates Motel*.

The hit US show, serving as a modern-day prequel to Alfred Hitchcock's iconic *Psycho*, charts the progress of a young Norman from a somewhat normal teenager to the horrific psychopath we met in the 1960 film, famously played by Anthony Perkins. Stuffing dead pets is just the start, though. In Season One, Norman, played by Brit actor Freddie Highmore (*Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*) is introduced to the weird

pastime by the father of his best friend, Emma Decody (another Brit, Olivia Cooke) and this year, the psycho-in-waiting becomes more enamoured with the joys of filling animals with sand – and now he has an eerie-looking basement studio in which to practice his art.

It is here, seemingly in the genesis of Norman's dark and twisted mind, that we are being stared at by an eagle with a frozen expression, next to a bowl of plastic eyeballs. But Highmore doesn't think there is anything particularly wrong with his character's new favourite pastime. "It's just a hobby. Everyone needs a hobby," laughs Highmore. "He creates his own workshop, and it starts off with road kill, various animals that he finds outside the motel that he then starts to stuff and keep. And he's still got his nice little pet dog – that's now in Norman's bedroom – his first creation."

Last time we saw young Norman, he was staggering along a dark road in the rain, back to the motel and the arms of his loving mother Norma (Vera Farmiga), having possibly just brutally murdered his teacher, Miss Watson, although he has no recollection of doing such a thing. Did he kill her? Given all we know about who young Norman becomes, it's likely that he was the one who viciously slashed her throat. And after finding out midway through the first season that his father's mysterious death was in fact a case of patricide with a blender, with Norman again having no memory of it, a pattern of killing is starting to emerge. As Norman is bright enough to realise that something is amiss with the events of the fatal evening, he is slowly becoming more cognisant of his demons.

"Even if Norman doesn't remember what exactly he was doing that night, ➤





## MUMMY'S BOY

Star Freddie Highmore on going from being the boy with the golden ticket in *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* to "the cutest little psycho killer"

**Are things going to get any better for Norman this season? How's his love life?**

There's a new love interest that comes in the second season, so I guess we will have to see how that all comes together. It is someone who we haven't met yet, who comes in as Norman's new immediate love interest. But those feelings for Emma towards Norman are still there, and Norman's feelings towards Bradley haven't just dissipated.

**Is it difficult knowing how your character ends up?**

Certainly the character has no knowledge of it, but in terms of mapping out the arc of the character, I've actually found it to be quite useful knowing the end. I think some actors on other television shows might get a bit frustrated to, for example, be playing a character who they think for the first season is nice, and then at the end it's revealed that actually he's running the evil gang, and you think, 'Oh no, I haven't been playing that at all; I have just been playing this nice person.' Whereas with Norman there is never any chance of that. It's just about setting a time scale for that.

**Do you ever think, 'I've got to put a slightly darker edge to everything he does' even when he's being nice?**

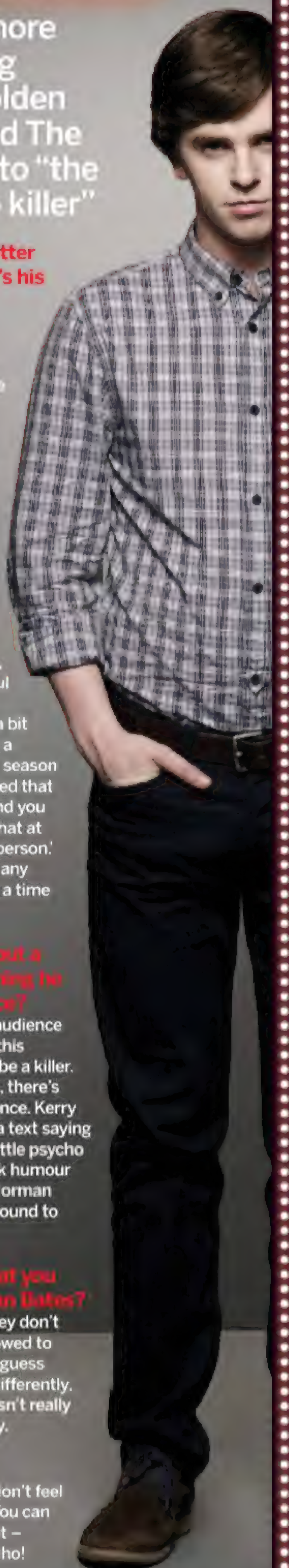
Not necessarily, because I think the audience does that for you; they come in with this expectation that Norman is going to be a killer. One example is in the second season, there's a scene where Norman has a little dance. Kerry [Ehrin, executive producer] sent me a text saying how it was funny; it was "the cutest little psycho killer" she'd ever seen. That's the dark humour behind the show, like when you see Norman at a party trying to fit in by jiggling around to the music.

**Do your family and friends treat you differently now you are Norman Bates?**

They don't see me any differently; they don't hide kitchen knives away. I'm still allowed to do everything that I want to do. But I guess my friends have never seen me any differently, having done films before, so this doesn't really change their perception of me, luckily.

**And has it changed you?**

No, I have stayed reasonably sane. I don't feel that I have been too badly affected. You can verify – having been to visit me on set – that I'm not raging around like a psycho!



➤ it is incredibly odd to have been in the person's house when she died and not remember what happened," admits Highmore. "He is going to try and put two and two together and think, 'Oh, well, maybe I had something to do with it.' There is a growing self-awareness in Norman of who he might become and who he might be. We know from the first season that he doesn't remember certain things about his life, but he will now start to question why he doesn't remember them. So that's an interesting place for the second season to start."

The show picks up in the aftermath of the murder, then rapidly skips forward four months, where we discover that the shiny new Bates Motel is doing a roaring trade, and everything in Norma and Norman's life is getting better and better after the traumas of the first season (you know, Norma being raped, Norma offing her rapist and enlisting Norman to help dump the body, Norma's short-term lover Deputy Shelby secretly

running an Asian sex ring, before Norma's eldest son and Norman's half-brother Dylan shot him outside the motel – that sort of trauma). But trouble is never far away for the dysfunctional duo, as an impending bypass threatens their livelihood. And Norma is not going to take it lying down.

"This is her dream, coming here and being a motelier," says Farmiga, when we speak to her later. "She is finally in a very successful, joyful part of her life, and is realising the life that she has ached to have, which is success, love and friendship. That's what she is seeking for herself and for Norman. She is not going to give that up easily."

**B**ACK ON THE SOUNDSTAGE IN VANCOUVER, WHERE THE INTERNAL SETS FOR THE SHOW HAVE BEEN LOVINGLY ASSEMBLED, WE'RE LED AROUND THE CAVERNOUS STUDIO

and treated to some incredible sights.

The inside of Norma's house on the hill is constructed almost entirely as it appears,



Beneath the shiny exterior of the motel lurks a house of horrors. Sound familiar?





with a front door leading to hall, kitchen, sitting room, and the staircase ascending to a landing with doors all around that actually lead to nowhere. But the most notable detail about the interior of the Bates' abode is the incredible number of photographs that adorn every flat surface and virtually every inch of wall space.

To say that Norma is a little obsessed with her son is a huge understatement. There are dozens of pictures of Norman at every age (all actual shots of Freddie Highmore as a kid), alongside even more pictures of Norma holding a baby at various stages of growth (actually images of Vera Farmiga with her own children). It would be very cute in any other house, but in the home of the Bates, we know it speaks volume to the mother's twisted relationship with her son.

Farmiga tries to explain Norma's inability to allow her son to break away from those maternal apron strings, and why she has to cuddle him so much in that uncomfortable-



**"IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT NORMAN GOT A LITTLE BIT OF HIS CRAZINESS FROM HIS MUM"**

**MAX THERIOT**

## BATES MOTEL

Dread & Breakfast



to-watch way. "It is difficult for Norma, because she has no other confidants in her life," she says. "Norman is her best friend, so that neediness fits into the physicality. She sees him as - and is still treating him like - an eight-year old, not an 18-year old."

The next day, we head an hour outside of Vancouver, where the iconic Bates house stands atop a small hill, with the famous motel below. The set designers used the blueprints from *Psycho*, but they've added a few mod cons: guests can now use the free Wi-Fi, for example. But despite all the evidence pointing to us being in the 21st Century, the impending residence towering over the whole property instils the same sense of terror as Hitchcock's original.

Even the location, officially in Aldergrove, British Columbia, is itself a little weird. Producer Justis Greene tells of strange events that have occurred during filming. In the first season, the set was plagued by

wasps, something that the crew reported as never having been an issue in the area before. And this season, at dusk every night, thousands of crows fly over the set, scaring the bejesus out of everyone involved. The crows (joyously, a gathering of crows is a 'murder') - alleged to be the largest in North America - seem to have got their Hitchcock tales mixed up, but don't be surprised to see one end up in Norman's workshop before the season is out.

Around the back of the house, it's just a plain wooden wall with wooden steps up to various upstairs windows, so a director can shoot either Norma or Norman staring out of them, but there is nothing else inside. We are told that someone stuck a Hitchcock silhouette in one of the windows during a day's shooting in Season One, but no one is quite sure if it ever snuck into the broadcast episode. In keeping with Hitchcock's penchant for giving himself a cameo in his movies, look out for that ➤

Knowing what we know, don't expect a happy ending to the friendship between Emma and Norman.



## PSYCHO ANALYSIS

While it's not hard to count the contributions Alfred Hitchcock made to cinema, he made a splash on the small screen too...

### 1 CREATOR CAMEO

Hitchcock sneaks into every film. Joss Whedon cameos in *Buffy* episodes, and even the comics.

### 2 ACTION SURVIVOR

The normal people who end up in extraordinary situations like *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Nerd Herder Chuck Bartowski becomes a super-spy in *Chuck*.

### 3 MACGUFFIN

Alfred Hitchcock popularised the term and used it in movies like *Psycho*. Every season of *Smallville* featured an object that characters would be obsessed with.

### 4 AUTHOR APPEAL

The majority of female characters will be blonde. The cast of *Hollyoaks*.

### 5 OVERBEARING MOTHER

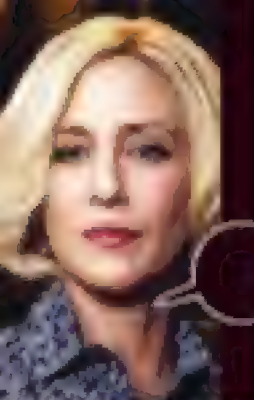
Guys have the most domineering mums, as seen in *Psycho*. Hoyt Fortenberry was on a tight leash in *True Blood*.

### 6 FREUDIAN EXCUSE

The villain had an abusive childhood and that's why they're evil. *Farscape*'s Scorpius had a tough upbringing by the Scarrans, which is why he hates them.







## SET VISIT

Bates Motel

➤ little Easter Egg if you re-watch the first ten episodes.

The motel, however, is very different from the house. There are four complete rooms, with fully functioning showers – there is even ‘Bates Motel’ soap and shampoo for the discerning guest who is brave enough to stand under the famous jets. But in the room we are currently standing in, we are faced by video monitors showing the scene they are filming up by the front door of the house, a tense stand-off between Norma and Sheriff Romero (*Lost*’s Nestor Carbonell), with the latter demanding to see Norman. Is he finally going to get his comeuppance for his murderous indiscretions? Doubtful.

**T**HIS SEASON, SHERIFF ROMERO GETS MORE INVOLVED WITH THE DANGEROUS FAMILY/CARBONELL, IN HIS SHERIFF’S OUTFIT, SITS DOWN TO ADDRESS WHAT’S IN STORE FOR him. “My character will be more interwoven into the fabric of the dysfunctional family of the Bates, Dylan and Emma, and he will certainly be more present in the motel,” Carbonell tells us. “There will even be circumstances that lead to him actually becoming a guest.”



**“NORMAN IS JUST LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE, EXCEPT FOR THIS LITTLE THING THAT MAKES HIM GO A LITTLE MAD AT TIMES”**

**FREDDIE HIGHMORE**

Outside the motel sit the characters’ cars, all in beautiful working order, from Romero’s hulking Sheriff’s cruiser and Norma’s classic Mercedes to Emma’s cute bright orange VW Beetle. Nothing is just for show, as Carbonell drives off set in his character’s vehicle back to the actors’ trailers that sit half a mile down the road so as not to be in any of the camera shots.

Back here, a large tent has been erected – replete with several space heaters, as it is literally freezing in Canada in early November – in which we get to chat to the cast members. Highmore, bundled up in as many layers as is possible, could not be further from the troubled boy he portrays, seeming as affable a chap as you could possibly wish to meet. He is even convinced that Norman is a sweet guy. Really.

“There are nice moments in the second season where you see him interacting as a normal guy, this normal teenager who’s coming to the end of school,” says Highmore. “It’s certainly pushed that Norman is just like everybody else, except for this little thing that makes him go a little mad at times.”

Farmiga is a bit distracted when she comes over to talk, as she has a huge



Norman’s new taxidermy hobby is as on-the-nose as allusions get.





For all its creepy forboding, at its heart *Bates Motel* is about a mother who loves her son – only too much, perhaps.

monologue in the scene she is filming that afternoon, so has been busy learning it all morning. She is also feeling under the weather, so is nursing a big cup of Russian vegetable soup while wearing a oversized, thick and gaudy jumper, definitely not out of Norma's usual wardrobe.

"Norma is a magnet for disaster, and crazy people do tend to gravitate towards her," claims Farmiga. "But that is not necessarily the case this season. So it is interesting to see when there is some sort of semblance of normalcy, how that figures into her life in unexpected ways."

Season One also saw the reintegration into the family fold of Norman's half-brother Dylan, played by Max Thieriot, who managed to rack up a couple of dead bodies in his short time in White Pine Bay, and the 25-year-old actor believes/fears that his character could be heading in the same direction as his sibling.


"I think it's safe to say that Norman got a little bit of his craziness from his mum, and being that she is also Dylan's mum, I think that he has got his problems too," admits Thieriot. "While he is not Norman – clearly – those issues do flare up every once in a while."

This does not bode well for Bradley (Nicola Peltz), the girl who both brothers love. Season Two sees her continuing the search for her father's killer, and with the identity of her dad's mistress being revealed in last year's finale – then being brutally murdered – it is possible that things don't

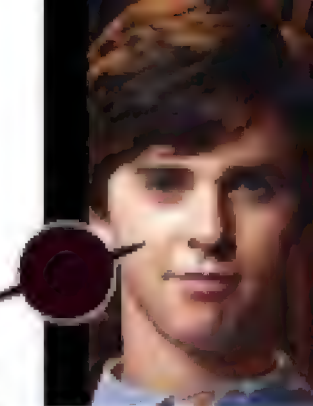
get any easier for poor Bradley. Being the object of Norman's affection is unlikely to end well.

Which is good news for Emma's unrequited love for a certain Mr Bates, although British actress Cooke – with a surprisingly strong northern accent – doesn't hold out a lot of hope for the odd couple, while revealing what is in store for the cystic-fibrosis suffering, oxygen tank-wielding Emma Decody.

"Emma is continuing to work at the motel. In the beginning, she and Norman go off on their separate ways with their own stories, but then events happen during the season which bring them together, but not in the way you may think. But she is continuing to try and infiltrate the Bates family and failing at it miserably," admits Cooke. "She just wants to have a real family and looks up to Norma so, so much, and would just love her as a mother figure."

We can't think of anything scarier right now, except maybe Norman's basement. As we leave the set late in the day, it is difficult not to stare back at that sinister house on the hill and feel the sense of foreboding that has been synonymous with the place since it was first introduced to the public back in the Sixties. In this iteration of the *Psycho* tale, Norman has not yet turned his mother into a mummy. But he has started to learn how... 

*Bates Motel* Season Two will air on the Universal Channel in April.



## MOTHER KNOWS BEST

Vera Farmiga reveals whose days are numbered in Season Two...

### How is it playing the mother of a psycho?

It's incredibly challenging for me, and I suppose that's why I am grateful for this boutique ten-episode scenario. I don't think I have the stamina to go more than ten episodes, because it is that demanding, emotionally and physically.

### How do you relate to Norma?

I'm the mother of two toddlers at home, and so my role as a mother deepens this work. I understand now what lengths a mother will go to in order to defend her child. Sometimes we love our children so much that we don't see clearly, and I see how my love for my children rules me.

### Can you ever come to terms with the fact that it may actually be her fault, to a certain extent?

I don't think it is just his relationship with mother, I think there are so many contributing factors. It's a really delicate combination of all that, and this wasn't the case of a mother loving her son not enough, but loving him too much. Obviously, he has grown up with a mother who is holding back a lifetime of grief, shame, pain and frustration, and her way of coping is that she'd prefer to look at it as creative visualisation. I would call it denial if I am going to be analysing it, but that's her way of coping. The bottom line is that she wants a better life, she wants to know what normalcy means. That is the root word of her name, and Norman's name.

### It can't be easy watching your son stuff animals for fun.

Norma is really worried about Norman and the extra-curricular activities he's throwing himself into and the way he copes with his teacher's death, which is really worrisome.

### Do you think her intentions are good?

I find her to be kind of a typical mother. She doesn't always do the right thing, but I know she means well in those decisions, like starting from decision one, the decision to move there. But for example, Keith Summers comes in. Does she handle that rape correctly? I find the gender bias very interesting sometimes, how people respond to that. OK, maybe it was one stab too much.

### Who do you think is going to bite the dust next?

I know Max has become such a golden boy, and he is really great for demographics, so it's probably not going to be Max. Honestly, I think Olivia [Cooke, who plays Emma] better watch out!



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# SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick  
of the entertainment  
releases out this month

★★★★ Outstanding ★★★★★ Thoroughly entertaining ★★★ Good but somewhat lacking ★★ Fair at best ★ Avoid as you should I, Frankenstein



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**AWARDEXPLAINED** THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE FOUR STARS OR MORE...

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# 70 CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER

"GRIPPING, EXCITING AND  
SURPRISINGLY TOUGH"

T TRIVIA THE WORKING TITLE OF THE WINTER SOLDIER WAS FREEZER BURN



## FILM INFO

**Released**  
Out now

**Certificate**  
12A

**Directors**  
Anthony Russo, Joe Russo

**Screenwriters**  
Christopher Markus,  
Stephen McFeely

**Cast**  
Chris Evans, Scarlett  
Johansson, Samuel L.  
Jackson, Sebastian Stan

**Distributor**  
Disney

**Running Time**  
136 mins



# CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER



Falcon in the middle

## WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE AND CAN WE TRUST THEM?

**Sharon (Emily VanCamp)**

Cap's neighbour seems friendly enough and isn't averse to getting to know him better. So what's she hiding?

**Sam Wilson (Anthony Mackie)**

A former pilot who now runs a veterans' support group. His patriotism and loyalty will almost definitely be useful.

**Alexander Pierce (Robert Redford)**

Security council member and Nick Fury's boss, not to mention collaborator on Project Insight. Suspiciously hard to read.

**Brock Rumlow (Frank Grillo)**

Leader of the Strike Team who has Cap's back in the field. He's a company man; makes you wonder whose orders he's following.

**Winter Soldier (Sebastian Stan)**

Unstoppable masked assassin with a metal arm. Looks kind of familiar...

After *Iron Man 3*'s buddy movie capering and *Thor: The Dark World*'s entertaining shenanigans, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* feels like something new. With a strong script, a timely message, bruising fight sequences and a clear sense of direction, this feels like Marvel demonstrating that they can grow up with their audience.

Drawing on Ed Brubaker and Steve Epting's comic arc, *The Winter Soldier* has a distinct air of Seventies conspiracy thrillers about it (which is fitting, given the presence of Robert Redford as the sinister authority figure) and a healthy dash of Tom Clancy. The film keeps coming back to the idea of freedom and the duty that comes with it. There's no extraterrestrial menace here; the threat is from within.

Steve Rogers (Chris Evans) has settled in Washington, where he divides his time between SHIELD operations and running laps around joggers. After he discovers that Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson) gave him and Black Widow/

Natasha Romanoff (Scarlett Johansson) separate orders for the same mission, Steve begins to question SHIELD's motives. He's proved right when someone close to him is attacked, but how high does this conspiracy go, and who can he trust?

Cap has always known about the burden of responsibility, so it makes sense that this is the film to not only to further develop Rogers and SHIELD, but lay the groundwork for Phase 3. It certainly has one of the strongest scripts. With a coherent plot nailed down, free of distracting fan service or wandering focus, there's plenty of room for some overdue character development.

More than any other Avenger, it's Cap who will sacrifice himself for the greater good, and this latest offering proves that he's not just the conscience of the super-group; he's the heart. He's told throughout that he's a terrible liar, needs to update his attitude, and is in the wrong business. The fact that his good nature has been manipulated and betrayed is beautifully played by Evans, and makes the mission personal.

One of the film's most successful elements is the partnership between Cap and Black Widow. Johansson and Evans have great chemistry, and watching the two sides of the same coin poke holes in each others' notions of loyalty and duty gives the film a vital depth. The duo are joined by Anthony Mackie's Sam Wilson/Falcon, an

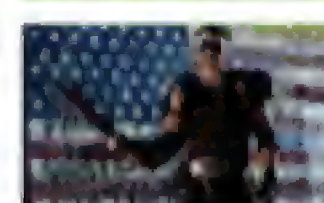
example of modern-day patriotic heroism, who is mostly kept on the sidelines until the final third, but makes a good impression.

Always on their tail is the Winter Soldier himself (Sebastian Stan). The decision to use him sparingly pays off, as he appears for short bursts of intense violence, and his fight sequences are thrilling. Directors Anthony and Joe Russo prove more than capable of handling huge spectacle, but the film is at its strongest when it keeps things down to earth, either on the streets of the capital or the fantastic early assault on a terrorist-held boat.

There are flaws, however. The middle section is flabby, while the gritty political thriller elements don't always sit comfortably with the more outlandish comic-book villainy. However, by keeping Cap and his journey the focal point, *The Winter Soldier* remains a gripping, exciting and surprisingly tough film that uses current concerns to highlight the character's strengths and tease an exciting new direction. We expect fun spectacle from Marvel, but Cap gives us brains and heart too.

**Jonathan Hatfull**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**Watchmen**  
Zack Snyder mostly succeeded in adapting Alan Moore's landmark graphic novel into a solid film.

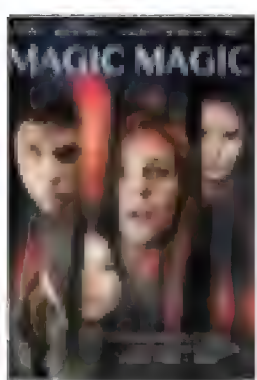






## MAGIC MAGIC Water world

**Details** 15 // 94 mins // 18 April **Director** Sebastián Silva **Screenwriter** Sebastián Silva  
**Cast** Juno Temple, Michael Cera, Emily Browning, Agustín Silva, Catalina Sandino Moreno  
**Distributor** Koch Media



**Alone in a** foreign country, abandoned by her best friend and unable to speak the local language, *Magic Magic*'s Alicia (Juno Temple) goes off the deep end in more ways than one. Although there's no real threat as such, this is both deeply scary and intensely stressful – a panic attack drawn out to an hour and a half.

It's obvious from the beginning that something terrible is going to happen. Going on holiday with a group of near strangers to an island miles from civilisation? That's how most horrors start. Jetlagged, lonely and paranoid, Alicia agrees to let wannabe hypnotist Agustín (Agustín Silva) experiment on her, upon which everything devolves into a nightmarish kind of non-logic. *Magic Magic* trades in discomfort, not to mention in making things awkward for its characters and the audience. At times it's genuinely difficult to watch.

For the most part that's intentional, although some of the more cringeworthy moments come courtesy



of the script's ham-fisted approach to symbolism. You don't need to be an expert in Jungian psychology to twig that there's something going on with all the water in this movie, and the name of Michael Cera's character – 'Brink' – is pretty on-the-nose.

But the performances sell the human drama over the pop psychology. Temple is painfully vulnerable and sympathetic even when she's being irrational, while Cera turns all of his endearing awkwardness into something menacing, even repulsive. Everyone's hiding something, and although not all of the plot threads get resolved, maybe that's for the best. The film draws its slightly demented energy from its characters' fear of being found out – a fear that prevents them from communicating properly and inevitably steers them into tragedy.

The ending is a little too abrupt – like a final, unexpected kick in the shins – but *Magic Magic* was never interested in making you feel at home. It's a fascinating trip, but make sure you've got someone to make you a nice, calming cup of tea afterwards.

**Sarah Dobbs**  
**FILM** ★★★

### OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**Take Shelter**  
 Is the apocalypse coming, or is Curtis losing his mind? This is another incredibly stressful watch.



## DIVERGENT Hunger Games for the starving

**Details** 12A // 139 mins // Out now **Director** Neil Burger **Screenwriter** Evan Daugherty  
**Cast** Shailene Woodley, Theo James, Kate Winslet, Zoë Kravitz, Mekhi Phifer, Maggie Q, Jai Courtney **Distributor** Entertainment One



**Adapted from** Veronica Roth's trilogy of novels, *Divergent* is a real disappointment. Society in post-apocalyptic Chicago is divided into five

factions: Abnegation, Amity, Candor, Erudite and Dauntless. Each young person must take a test to determine their faction, but they can still choose another. But there's no going back – leaving your faction means turning your back on your old life and family.

Our hero Beatrice 'Tris' Prior, an awkward teen from Abnegation, learns she's equally Abnegation (selfless), Erudite (intelligent) and Dauntless (brave). However 'Divergent' personalities are hunted by the state, and she's told never to reveal the true result to anyone.

Beatrice chooses to join Dauntless – the warrior class, who spend most of the movie climbing and acting like jocks on spring break – they even get tattoos. What ensues is a protracted training montage until the Erudite faction, led by the ice-cold Jeanine Matthews (Kate Winslet), stage a coup to take over society.

*Divergent* explores the struggle that young people face upon leaving home, with society trying its damndest to pigeonhole you – only this goes on for well over two hours.

and is so derivative that it'll make your head hurt.

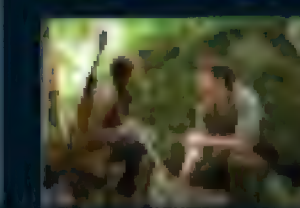
The first half is a bog-standard origin story with few surprises, while the second loses its way via a convoluted plot and stilted action scenes that make you feel nothing. What's tragic is that the movie does not diverge enough from its closest competition, *The Hunger Games*.

Divorcing it from source its material, the film adaptation of Suzanne Collins' books was engaging because you invested in Katniss, and much of its success lies with Jennifer Lawrence's performance. While Woodley has humanity and sensitivity, she doesn't command the screen. She and love interest Four (Theo James) manage simmering build-up well, but when their characters' romance comes out of its shell it's all too predictable.

*Divergent* is soft-serve dystopia; one a younger audience might watch as a springboard into the harder stuff. Here's hoping that the inevitable sequels are less plodding.

**Krystal Sim**  
**FILM** ★★★★★

### OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**The Hunger Games**  
 Katniss Everdeen volunteers for the annual tournament that pits teens against each other.

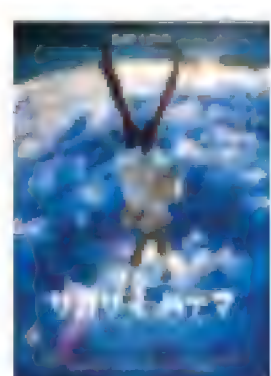




# PATEMA INVERTED

Romancing on the ceiling

**Details** PG // 99 mins // 2 May **Director** Yoshihiro Yoshiura **Screenwriter** Yoshihiro Yoshiura **Cast** Yoshihiro Yoshiura, Yukiyo Fujii, Nobuhiko Okamoto, Shintaro Ohata, Shinya Fukumatsu **Distributor** Alltheanime.com



**Romantic cinema** has always flirted with the idea of love turning lives upside down. In the case of Japanese anime *Patema Inverted*, however, that is quite literally the case.

The second feature-length film from director Yoshihiro Yoshiura, it introduces the concept of two worlds running parallel, the result of a botched scientific experiment that has reversed the effects of gravity. Thus, civilisation splits into the 'real world' and those that walk upside down under Earth's recesses.

It is there that we meet Patema, a young princess of the underground determined to go above and see the sky. Alas, Patema's journey takes her into a world where the sky is an infinite drop and an oppressive, anti-inverts government rules. With no literal leg to stand on, Patema meets Age, a bereaved boy who feels equally trapped since his father's death, and the upside-down pair unite in an existence gone topsy turvy.

It's a strong concept, and one that – at first – is executed with subtle flourishes

of self-awareness of the genre's conventions, with one scene cutting the traditional sweeping romantic music of Patema and Age's first meeting into a record-scratch moment of cynicism. Sadly, it's not consistent. Instead, the initiative wilts alongside the film's ideas, with flimsy characters and a stock villain, with neither world developed enough to support the muddled narrative. For while the mystery of the world's plight is intriguing, it is never backed up by a sense of pace, with most of the film feeling like 90 minutes of two teenagers dubiously hobbling around in a never-ending 69 position.

Nonetheless, parts of Yoshiura's vision are smart, bold and visually striking; the idea of an inverted society making for a novel and effective take on the perspective of others – especially when Age himself finds his feet planted on the ceiling. Yet, especially in an age of Studio Ghibli anime, just having a good idea for a story isn't enough; you also need to know how to tell one. Otherwise, you will merely find yourself falling into the sky.

**Stephen Kelly**  
**VERDICT** ★★☆☆

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**The Girl Who Leapt Through Time**  
Riisa Naka voices another fantastically afflicted teen.



# THE KING AND THE MOCKINGBIRD

A loving restoration of a French animated classic

Must see now!

**Details** U // 87 mins // 11 April **Director** Paul Grimault **Screenwriters** Paul Grimault, Jacques Prévert, Hans Christian Andersen **Cast** Jean Martin, Pascal Mazzotti, Raymond Bussières, Agnès Viala, Renaud Marx, Roger Blin **Distributor** StudioCanal



**The King And The Mockingbird** is a classic of French animation.

Scripted by poet Jacques Prévert and director Paul Grimault, it's been cited by Studio Ghibli legends Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata as a major influence on their work.

The film is a loose adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Shepherdess And The Chimney Sweep*. Grimault and Prevert's first attempt to tell this tale was released in 1953, but they were never happy with the results. It took Grimault decades to regain the rights and complete the film as he originally intended, with half the feature meticulously reworked into *The King And The Mockingbird*.

The story follows the tyrannical King of Takicardia, who is in love with a painting of a shepherdess, while she only has eyes for a portrait of a chimney sweep. At night these pictures come to life and escape the king's apartments, pursued by his even-more-villainous portrait doppelganger.

Only the titular mockingbird stands up to the ridiculous despot, helping the lovers evade the king's forces as they make their way through the underbelly of the city.

For a film half-conceived in the Forties, it's forward thinking and bold. Scenes of mass-produced iconography hearken back to the likes of *Modern Times* and *Metropolis*, and sit side by side with more traditional fairy tale imagery of kings, palaces and courtiers. Steampunk fans may also be pleasantly surprised: the King uses a metal elevator to travel up and down his kingdom and even has a giant robot that beats its chest like King Kong. This fusion of old and new is daring and attention-grabbing.

The score is by Wojciech Kilar, who also created the music for *The Ninth Gate* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, which was also used in *American Horror Story*, in case you recognised it. The film suits his reflective and melancholic soundtrack, particularly as there's minimal dialogue, with much being conveyed through movements and backdrops.

*The King And The Mockingbird* is a charming film, worthy of your time for its fascinating history, humour and blend of styles.

**Krystal Sim**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**Laputa: Castle In The Sky**  
Two children search for a legendary castle in the clouds.



## FILM INFO

### Released

10 April

### Certificate

15

### Director

John Pogue

### Screenwriters

Craig Rosenberg, Oren Moverman, John Pogue, Tom de Ville

### Cast

Jared Harris, Sam Claflin, Olivia Cooke, Erin Richards

### Distributor

Lionsgate

### Running Time

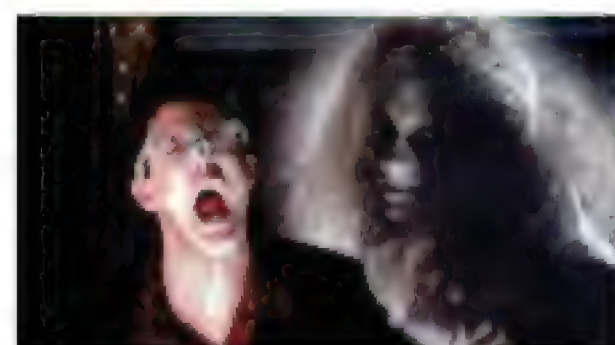
98 mins



# THE QUIET ONES

Ghosts of screenplays past

## TOP 5 GHOST HUNTERS



### 1 Dennis Rafkin (Thirteen Ghosts)

Matthew Lillard uses special glasses to see evil in this remake.

### 2 Lorraine Warren (The Conjuring)

Vera Farmiga's ability to view spectres is more of a curse than a blessing.

### 3 Tangina Barrons (Poltergeist)

Finding Carole Anne is a job for Zelda Rubinstein's spiritual medium, who shows up and tells her not to go into the light.

### 4 Aurora (The Orphanage)

The séance sequence is absolutely nail-biting, led by a brilliant performance from Geraldine Chaplin.

### 5 The Ghostbusters (Ghostbusters)

They're ready to believe you. RIP Harold Ramis.

It feels as though we've been waiting a long time for Hammer's *The Quiet Ones* to make it to the cinema. The film went into production shortly after the huge success of *The Woman In Black*, so we were eager to see their second revival ghost story.

Jared Harris (*Mad Men*, *Fringe*) plays the swaggering Professor Coupland, who is investigating paranormal events that seem to be caused by troubled individuals. With a small research team and cameraman Brian McNeil (Sam Claflin), he brings his unstable but willing test subject Jane Harper (Olivia Cooke) to a remote country house. There, he hopes to provoke Jane's latent telekinetic ability and obtain a scientific explanation for poltergeists.

*The Quiet Ones* sets out its stall early on; there's the Seventies setting, spooky house and things that go bump in the night. We are very much in classical British horror territory here, and the first half's determination to establish that mood is successful for the most part. The atmosphere of traditional horror as the ghost hunters gather around Jane like she's a human ouija board is like sitting in an old armchair in front of a warm fire. It helps that the young and beautiful cast is led by an energetic and charismatic turn from Harris, who seems to be channelling a combination of Peter Cushing and Malcolm McDowell.

There's also something appealing about the notion of vintage ghost-hunting, as James

Wan's *The Conjuring* showed. Watching Coupland and his young colleagues tackle the increasingly dangerous manifestations with their bulky equipment and vintage camera gives *The Quiet Ones* an identity of its own, separate from the recent spate of found-footage ghost stories.

The reasons for the lengthy post-production period become apparent once the manifestations start. With three screenwriters adapting a previous script by *Urban Gothic*'s Tom de Ville, it does feel like several drafts were cobbled together to provide an ending. Moreover, the repetitive structure becomes irritating, as Coupland provokes a paranormal reaction, gets a boo scare and then argues with his team before the process begins all over again. Crucially, the final act feels rushed and unconvincing, squandering the atmosphere that the first half had built up.

This sense of uncertainty is present throughout, as the ghost story aspect bumps up against the filmmakers' desire to ensure they have your attention. However, the lack of consistency in the script makes it too easy to be jarred by the moments that work less well. What's more, when the hammier dialogue sits too close to the weaker effects it gets a bit creaky.

That being said, there is a lot that works in its favour. Cooke (who you may

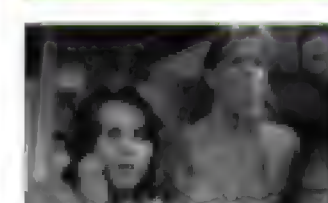
recognise as *Bates Motel*'s determined amateur detective Emma Decody) is superb as Jane, nailing the character's ability to shift from vulnerable waif to violent manipulator in the blink of an eye, and retaining the audience's sympathy while remaining dangerous. Her relationship with Coupland provides the film with one of its more interesting subplots, and she keeps us invested in the film even as it enters its silly finale.

It's also important to note that, as wobbly as *The Quiet Ones* gets, it is a lot of fun. Pogue creates a strong air of dread as the students settle into the house, and the early scenes are very well constructed, leading to some fantastic jump scares.

Ultimately, however, there's just too much that doesn't come together. Despite a strong first half and committed performances, *The Quiet Ones* scrambles at various horror clichés to arrive at a disappointing conclusion. It's a fun ride, but not a memorable one.

Jonathan Hatfull  
VERDICT ★★☆☆

## OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**The Haunting**  
An academic ghost hunt provides terrifying answers in arguably the best ghost story ever made.



## FEST INFO

### When

28 February – 2 March

### Where

Glasgow Film Theatre,  
Renfrew Street, Glasgow

## TICKETS

### Details

Event pass: £70

Single tickets: £8.50

### Website

www.frightfest.co.uk

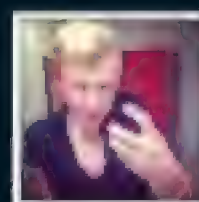
## FILMS

Afflicted // Almost Human  
// Killers // Mindscape //  
Proxy // Savaged // The  
Sacrament // The Scribbler  
// Torment // Video Nasties:  
Draconian Days // Wolf  
Creek 2



## YOUR THOUGHTS

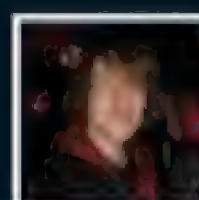
We asked you  
@SciFiNow what  
your favourite  
moments were



"Proxy  
hands down.  
Then *The  
Sacrament*."

Phenomenal day one,  
probably one of the best  
day schedules I've ever  
had in four years."

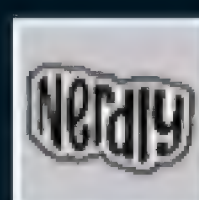
@scoutthehorizon



"Was amazing.  
*Almost Human*  
was in my top  
favourites."

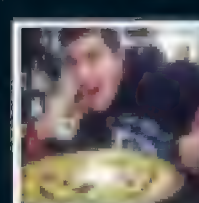
Great throwback alien  
abduction/slasher film!"

@MrMoppyhead



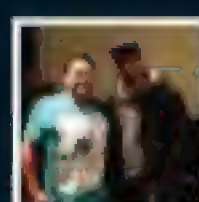
"*The  
Scribbler*. Best  
example of  
indie comic/  
movie superhero origin  
story since *The Crow*."

@NerdlyUK



"I'm torn  
between *Proxy*  
and *Savaged*.  
*Proxy* was the  
better film, but *Savaged*  
was just so much fun."

@fuckthis\_imout



"Thoroughly  
enjoyed it.  
A high  
standard  
of films. *Afflicted* was  
one of my faves – the FX  
was amazing."

@jasonprkr



# FILM4 FRIGHTFEST GLASGOW 2014

Providing the Glasgow Film Festival with some much-needed darkness, Film4 FrightFest's annual trip north of the border delivers a weekend full of chills and thrills for the local crowd and dedicated genre fans who made the journey from all over the UK...

**Getting things off** to a raucous start was Michael S Ojeda's *Savaged* ★★☆☆, in which deaf-mute Zoe (Amanda Adrienne) is brutally abused and killed by a gang of redneck rapists before being resurrected by a Native American shaman, with a furious chieftain spirit in tow. *Savaged* aims for a comic-book sensibility, but the results are mostly comedic. The action is surprisingly good, as Zoe plays tug-of-war with one of her attackers and his intestines, but it's totally ludicrous and makes frequent misjudged attempts at tugging our heartstrings.

Harsh but restrained, Zack Parker's *Proxy* ★★★★★ took any lingering giggles and killed them dead. Esther (Alexia Rasmussen) loses her baby after being brutally attacked, but finds some support from the similarly grieving Melanie (Alexa Havins). As the two get closer, secrets begin to bubble to the surface. With its focus on psychological trauma and a relentlessly bleak outlook, Parker is more interested in exploring the aftermath than the traumatic incident itself. It's slightly too long, but his determination to make us sit in his

characters' misery is hugely effective. The cast is superb, and although *Proxy* is tough to get through, ultimately it's definitely worth the effort.

Greg McLean's long-awaited *Wolf Creek 2* ★★★★★ sees John Jarratt return as outback nut job Mick Taylor. McLean is obviously aware that he can't play the same tricks again, and goes for gory dark comedy before throwing in action set pieces in addition to whatever genre tropes he wants. As things build to a bizarre, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*-esque finale, it's fun to see a director who is willing to take chances. It's messy and inconsistent, and frankly the raw terror of its predecessor has dissipated almost entirely, but *Wolf Creek 2* is surprisingly entertaining.

Ti West returned to the Glasgow Film Theatre to present *The Sacrament* ★★★★★, his found-footage take on a cult (or is it just a commune?) meltdown. We've already reviewed the film, and while it might not match the heights of his near-perfect *The House Of The Devil* and *The Innkeepers*, it's a very tense and well-acted piece of work that shows the director

stretching his filmmaking muscles to mine horror out of a scarily familiar situation.

Clif Prowse and Derek Lee's found-footage horror *Afflicted* ★★★★★ had a great pitch: *Chronicle* with body horror. The writer/director duo star as Cliff and Derek, who decide to embark on a year-long trip around the world, but a one-night stand in Paris leaves Derek with some new abilities. *Afflicted* largely lives up to the *Chronicle* comparisons by understanding that a great pitch simply isn't enough to make a great found-footage film. We care about the two leads, and Derek's transformation is played with a combination of terror and excitement, with some great effects. Despite some wobbles in the third act, *Afflicted* is a highly entertaining, inventive and likeable feature debut.

Jake West and Marc Morris' *Video Nasties: Draconian Days* ★★★★★, their fun and informative follow-up to the acclaimed *Video Nasties: Moral Panic, Censorship & Videotape*, traces the history of British film censorship from the rise of James Ferman as director of the BBFC through to the furor caused by the James





Katharine Isabelle continued her career resurgence in *Torment*.



The Mo brothers' *Killers* proved to be arguably the best film of the festival.

Bulger case and *Child's Play 3* to the legalisation of pornography. There's the same combination of humour, gruesome archive clips, informative talking heads and stern warnings regarding just how easy it is to forget that these things happened.

Suki (Katie Cassidy) explains how her attempts to beat her multiple personality disorder coincided with a steady number of fatalities at her halfway home tower block in *The Scribbler* ★★☆☆. It's a little bit sci-fi, a little bit horror, and a whole lot of angst. An *Identity*-like murder mystery in a dilapidated high-rise full of recovering lunatics sounds like fun, especially with this cast (Gina Gershon, Sasha Grey, Garret Dillahunt, Eliza Dushku), so it's a shame that this is so determinedly grim. *The Scribbler* comes to life when it embraces its comic-book sensibilities, but it's far too preoccupied with establishing itself as a scowling and snarky oddity, and takes far too long to lose its mind.

*Torment* ★★☆☆ sees Katharine Isabelle continue her genre comeback as Sarah, who has recently married single dad Cory (Robin Dunne), but is having trouble connecting with his young son Liam. They head to his country house for a fresh start, but soon discover that someone else has been there in their absence. The biggest

problem with *Torment* is its apparent determination to play by the rules of the home-invasion film, although it does present an effective and affecting family drama in its opening act. There are some well-constructed set pieces, but most of the best surprises come early on. It's competent, but not much more.

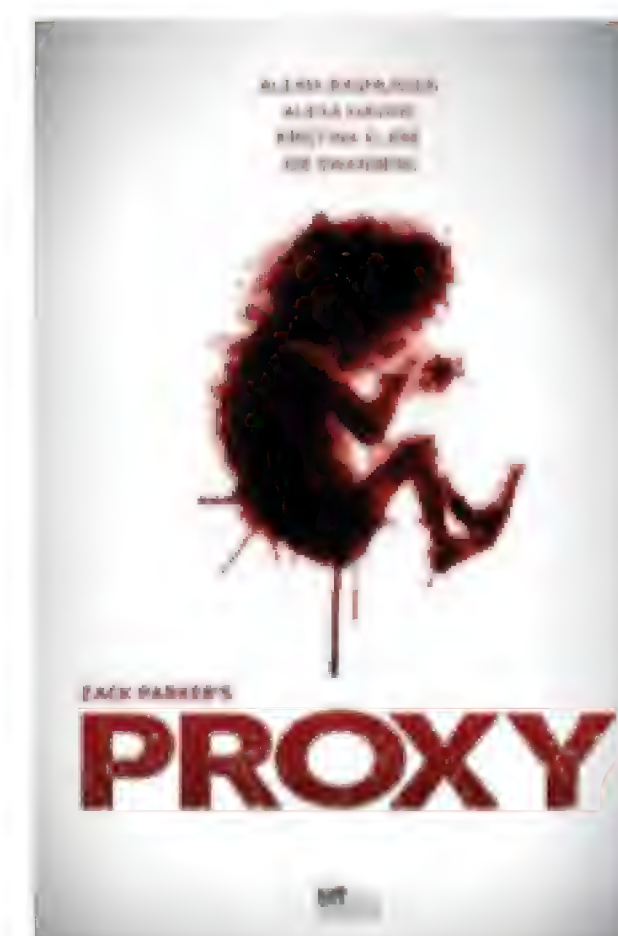
Next up was Jorge Dorado's *Mindscape* ★★☆☆, a handsome psychological thriller which pays tribute to the likes of Brian De Palma by way of *Inception*. John (Mark Strong) is one of the best 'mind detectives' around, capable of entering his subjects' memories, but when he takes on the case of troubled teen Anna (Taissa Farmiga), he realises that all is not as it seems. The film takes about 15 minutes to settle in, but things pick up once John and Anna begin their sessions. The script is probably the weakest element, as there aren't enough turns in the road that we can't see coming. Still, it's an entertaining and beautifully shot throwback to the thrillers of the Eighties.

The festival also saw Joe Begos pay tribute to John Carpenter with *Almost Human* ★★☆☆. Two years after witnessing his buddy Mark (Josh Ethier) being abducted, Seth (Graham Skipper) thinks that his friend might have returned.

He's right, but is Chris the same man he once was? First film problems are in evidence, but it's a movie made by horror fans for horror fans, and is mostly a lot of fun. There are a few missteps, but there's also a real sense of confidence, inventiveness and skill to go with the passion that reveals Begos as a talent to look out for. *Almost Human* is both an entertaining home-made love-letter and an impressive first effort.

Finally, it was time for the film that we'd picked as the likely highlight of FrightFest Glasgow 2014: The Mo brothers' *Killers* ★★★★★. It tells the parallel stories of Nomura (Kazuki Kitamura), a serial killer in Tokyo, and Bayu (Oka Antara), a troubled journalist in Jakarta, who begin a gruesome collaboration. The two storylines are expertly co-ordinated, as the horrifying Nomura begins to groom the tortured and temperamental Bayu into not only a colleague, but a soulmate. Park Chan-Wook's *Vengeance* trilogy is obviously a big influence on the film's dark comedy tone, and one lengthy set piece notably takes a page from *Oldboy*'s book of protracted clumsy violence. *Killers* is thrilling, gripping and brutal, and comfortably the best film of a strong festival.

Jonathan Hatfull







# BLOOD-C: THE LAST DARK

There will be blood

**Details** 15 // 110 mins // 2011 // **DVD** • **iTunes** • **Released** Out now **Director** Naoyoshi Shiotani **Cast** Kenji Nojima, Nana Mizuki, Atsushi Abe, Jun Fukuyama **Distributor** Manga Entertainment



**Blood-C: The Last Dark** is a direct continuation of the TV series that shares the same prefix, but does little to take the

franchise in a new direction. While the series had the time to obsess over character development, the film does not, leading to serious pacing issues – it gets off to an explosive start and then seems to stammer, its words sticking in its throat until the climax of the third act.

The premise is paper-thin, too: returning character Saya – a brooding, vengeance-seeking vampire schoolgirl – travels to Tokyo to hunt down veteran antagonist Fumito, who has enacted stringent anti-teenager laws. Considering the film carries a 15 rating, the angsty narrative framework feels a little misguided – the plot is anime-by-numbers and completely serviceable, but never picks up enough to be anything more than adequate.

Saya is supported by a cast of largely forgettable characters, who only serve

two core functions: providing light comic relief or contrasting against the cold inhumanity of Saya. For those familiar with *Blood-C*, the film implicitly ties up some – but not all – of the loose ends the series fizzled out on, and provides some much-needed characterisation of Saya herself. A katana-wielding schoolgirl vampire is all well and good, but the gimmick quickly deflates if there's no one behind those blood-red eyes.

When *The Last Dark* moves away from the languid conversational scenes, it finds its feet. The action-orientated parts of the film are a fantastic example of what high-budget adult anime can do: they're dark, beautifully animated and touch (briefly) on elements of Lovecraftian-styled body horror that may appeal to the more mature anime viewer.

*The Last Dark* is fairly inaccessible to anyone that hasn't seen the series; this film is all about fan service, and is really only aimed at those that want to drink a little more from the brimming *Blood-C* cup.

**Dom Peppiatt**  
**VERDICT** ★★☆☆☆

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Gilgamesh**  
Gothic anime at its finest, *Gilgamesh* is a TV series that is apocalyptic, ominous and gorgeously drawn.

# BIG BAD WOLVES

Bad moon rising

Sci-Fi Now  
Must see now!

**Details** 18 // 110 mins // 2013 // **DVD** • **iTunes** • **Released** 28 April **Directors** Aharon Keshales, Navot Papushado **Cast** Lior Ashkenazi, Tzahi Grad, Doval'e Glickman, Rotem Keinan **Distributor** Metrodome



Quentin Tarantino's film of 2013 – and one of ours too – the bitterly bleak follow-up to Aharon Keshales and Navot

Papushado's 2010 Israeli anti-slasher *Rabies* delivers a similar mix of bloody-nosed slapstick, caustic satire and a twist that sits in your gut like broken glass.

Like a mixture of *Saw* and *Reservoir Dogs*, *Big Bad Wolves* follows a school teacher (Rotem Keinan) suspected of being a serial



child-killer as he's hunted and tortured by a corrupt cop (Lior Ashkenazi) and a grieving parent (Tzahi Grad), both with an overriding stake in getting a confession.

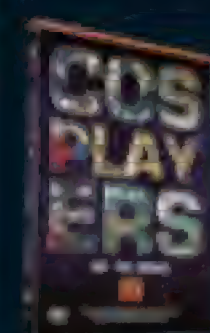
It should be a difficult watch, but the coating of black comedy helps it slide down with ease, and little is more disquieting than the sympathy you can't help but feel for even the most sadistic character as events turn against them.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

# COSPLAYERS UK: THE MOVIE

Dress to contest

**Details** Exempt // 83 mins // 2013 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Directors** Johnnie Oddball, Ed Hartwell **Cast** None **Distributor** Isis



**Obviously aimed at** MCM Expo's captive audience from the – usually younger and more anime-orientated end of the – UK cosplay scene, it's easy to make much of the obvious amateurishness of *Cosplayers UK: The Movie*. There are issues with sound and lighting that make it feel like a badly shot home movie, and absolutely horrible editing that makes huge chunks feel like they're simply there to push the running time over an hour. Some – especially those loyal to other cons – may also take issue with the prominence of MCM and the company's perceived role in the cosplay cosmos.

It's there where *Cosplayers UK* does scratch up its notches, with



surprisingly endearing interviews that come across as being free of agenda. Even when the Expo's enthusiastic cosplay team pop up, they're not reading from some imaginary propaganda sheet; they're simply sounding off, and the setting feels purely coincidental.

Plenty of documentaries can be technically bad, but few of them are as totally sincere as this one.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★



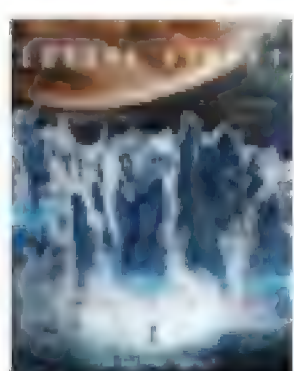
Blood-C: The Last Dark // Big Bad Wolves // Cosplayers UK: The Movie // Europa Report // Hellbenders // White Of The Eye



## EUROPA REPORT

Out of space

**Details** 12 // 89 mins // 2013 // **blinkbox** • **iTunes** // **Released** Out now **Director** Sebastian Cordero **Cast** Sharlto Copley, Daniel Wu, Michael Nyqvist, Karolina Wydra, Christian Camargo **Distributor** Ascot Elite Home Entertainment



### Approaching the found-footage

format from a faux-documentary standpoint, *Europa Report* sees a team of

astronauts head to the aforementioned moon of Jupiter on a mission aimed at discovering life. Inevitably, as is so often the case with these kinds of films, things quickly fall apart in progressively horrific fashion.

Combining the voyage of discovery aspect of *2001: A Space Odyssey* with the intimate space-based drama of *Moon*, *Europa Report* wears its influences on its sleeve, although this comes at the expense of establishing itself on its own merits. While the former stood out thanks to its unparalleled sense of wonder and the latter was galvanised by an extraordinary performance from its lead, *Europa Report* can't seem to make up its mind about what film it is, starting off as a talking-head documentary before descending into a game of last-man standing in space.

Its struggle to stand out isn't made any easier by the cast. Of the leads,

only Sharlto Copley possesses the requisite gravitas – or indeed, the acting chops – to elevate proceedings above the humdrum, which makes it all the more baffling that he is the first crew member to be offed. In his absence, Michael Nyqvist makes a decent fist of it, but like Copley he is sidelined in favour of more dour and less interesting individuals.

Despite its faults, there is plenty to enjoy. Snatched glimpses of future events in the footage cycle stand out as effective directorial flourishes, and with the crew's fate being made clear from the beginning, every scene is full of tension. The build-up to the finale is notably impressive in this regard, with the endings of the likes of *Armageddon* and *Deep Impact* being recalled, although obviously on a far more localised scale.

By being gripping, if not always entirely interesting, it could be argued that the filmmakers have missed one mark and hit another entirely. Still, at least in the process it has given itself something to be remembered by in the short term, even if *Europa Report* won't forever live in the memory.

**Steve Wright**

**VERDICT** ★★☆☆

### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



#### Moon

Functions as a decent companion piece, being one example of the thinking man's sci-fi flick.

## HELLBENDERS

Forgive me, father

**Details** 18 // 85 mins // 2012 // **DVD** // **Released** 14 April **Director** JT Petty **Cast** Clifton Collins Jr, Clancy Brown, Robyn Rikoon **Distributor** Koch Media



### Horror-comedy

*Hellbenders* has an irresistible focal point: a group of priests who keep themselves in a constant state of sin

so they can kamikaze demons back to hell. When a pagan god appears, Larry (Clifton Collins Jr) and the Brooklyn chapter of the Order of the Hellbound Saints are the last line between Earth and oblivion.

There are a number of factors working against director JT Petty: the budget is clearly minimal and the script never as funny as it needs to be. However, it is very well cast,



with Collins, Andre Royo and Dan Fogler on good form, and a towering performance from Clancy Brown as the Saints' irascible leader. Perhaps most importantly, Petty manages to create a fun atmosphere while sneaking in a little heart, making it very easy to spend time in the company of these characters.

It's not as brilliant as it could have been, but *Hellbenders* is certainly an entertaining way to spend 85 minutes. "I'm not your fucking dad," spits Larry at an outraged parishioner. Damn right.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

**VERDICT** ★★★★★



## WHITE OF THE EYE

American psychosis

**Must see now!**

**Details** 18 // 110 mins // 1987 // **Released** Out now **Director** Donald Cammell **Cast** David Keith, Cathy Moriarty, Alan Rosenberg **Distributor** Arrow Video



### Donald Cammell

made just four films in his career. *Performance* will always be his masterpiece,

although this stunning serial killer tale stands out as a strangely neglected but brutally powerful arthouse thriller.

When a series of women are brutally murdered, suspicion falls on sound technician Paul White (David Keith). Can the friendly father and husband really be keeping such a horrifying secret from his family?

*White Of The Eye* is gorgeously shot, as Cammell aims for a dream-like quality with splashes of vivid colour, and past and present merges as the sands of sanity shift. The opening sequence finds eye-catching details (the sight of a



goldfish flapping in a brisket dish is hard to forget) and the wilderness of nature clashes with the affluent suburban small town setting.

It meanders a little in the final 20 minutes, but this is a compelling look at madness that combines the artful intensity of *Manhunter* with the warped Americana of *The Reflecting Skin*. It is beautiful, shocking and quite brilliant.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

**VERDICT** ★★★★★



# FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL

End of a fear-a

**Details** 15 // 89 mins // 1974 // **DVD** // **Released** 28 April  
**Director** Terence Fisher **Cast** Peter Cushing, Shane Briant, Madeline Smith, David Prowse, John Stratton **Distributor** Icon Entertainment



**The last Hammer** film from Terence Fisher and the final of eight *Frankenstein* films for the company, *Frankenstein And The*

*Monster From Hell* functions both as a deliberately anachronistic reminder of what made the company great and a stark explanation for its slow death.

The setting is one of the series' most evocative, as Dr Simon Helder (Shane Briant)'s attempt to follow in Baron von Frankenstein footsteps results in him being sentenced to five years behind the dungeon walls of an asylum. There, he discovers Frankenstein (Peter Cushing) still alive, having turned the hospital into his playground, and the two embark on a new wave of necromancy.

Cushing is on pristine form. Icy and precise, his predatory mannerisms are magnetic, giving every impression of only noticing someone when they become a target for his bonesaw.

While it's nice to see the Baron have a bit of a bromance too – harking back to Paul Krempe in the first film – Helder's characterisation is wildly inconsistent. Despite his imitation of Frankenstein, he seems genuinely shocked to discover that dead inmates have been reanimated, and briefly takes on a stock hero and love interest role before accidentally releasing the monster (David Prowse in a gorilla costume) when he tries to kill it in its sleep.

Fisher isn't entirely focused either. Despite some fun moments – the inmate who believes himself to be God is pretty



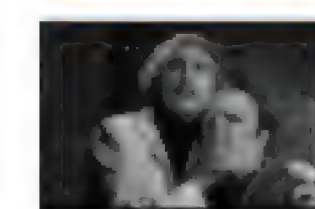
on the nose, and the brutal hosing down of Helder echoes better prison films – it's a plod, with largely static direction and a clumsily staged climax.

Released in 1974, the same year as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, *Frankenstein And The Monster From Hell* rolls up its frilly shirt and sprays everything down in (real) blood – all gloriously uncut and gratuitous, including a scene where Cushing kicks a brain around for no

reason and severs an artery with his teeth. It's all rather awkward, like a 'cool' supply teacher telling you to check out an indie band from six months ago.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★☆☆

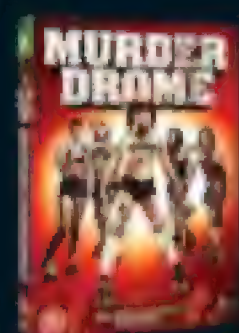
## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Young Frankenstein**  
 Released in the same year, Mel Brooks' monochrome mickey-take is a more effective tribute.

# MURDERDROME Hell on wheels

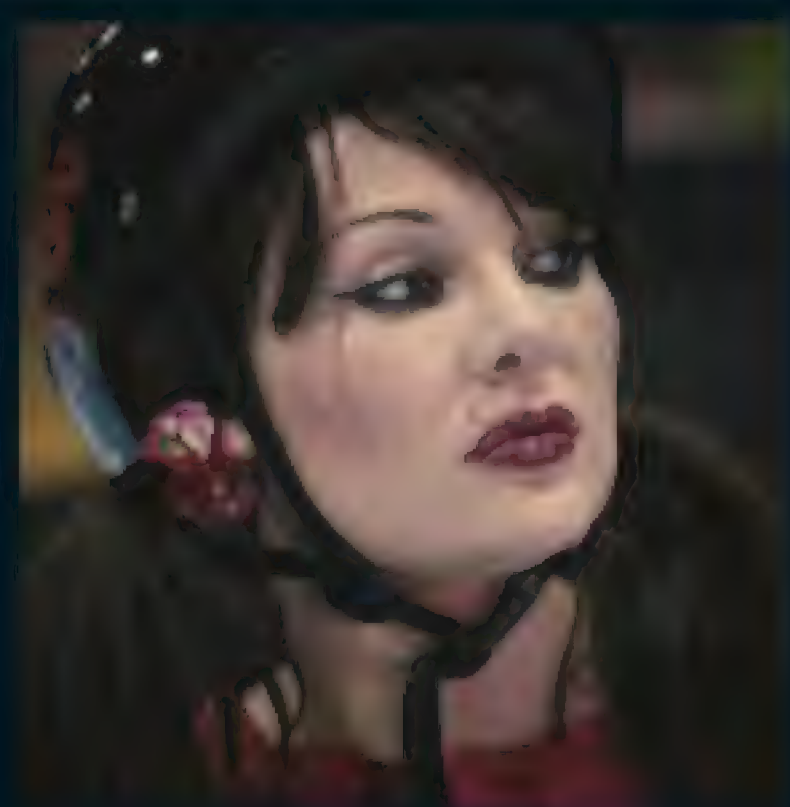
**Details** 15 // 89 mins // 2013 // **DVD** // **Released** 14 May  
**Director** Daniel Armstrong **Cast** Amber Sajben, Kat Anderson, Cyndi Lawbreaker  
**Distributor** Monster Pictures



**This micro-budget** Australian horror comedy sees a roller derby team face a vengeful demon with moderately entertaining consequences.

Director Daniel Armstrong makes the most of the sport at his film's centre, with some real roller derby stars sprinkled among the actors (some of who may have needed a bit more practice on their skates). Cherry Skye (Amber Sajben) is our heroine, whose new relationship starts a chain of events that awaken the demon Momma Skate. Can she stay alive long enough to stop the curse and save her teammates?

Although *Murderdrome* is never really laugh-out-loud funny, and the quality of the performances is varied, to say the least, there is a definite charm that comes from the



film's home-made nature and the easy chemistry between Cherry and her teammates (Kat Anderson's deadpan Trans Em is a standout).

It's not the batshit, blood-soaked roller derby horror we were hoping for, but it's still an amiable and inventive effort that should make for fun late-night viewing.

**Jonathan Hatfull**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

# SPARKS Lighten up

**Details** 15 // 94 mins // 2013 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now  
**Directors** Todd Burrows, Christopher Folino **Cast** Chase Williamson, Ashley Bell, Clancy Brown **Distributor** Image Entertainment



**The influences on** Todd Burrows and Christopher Folino's grim and gritty superhero tale are worn on the film's

sleeve, but it's to *Sparks'* credit that it finds its own identity.

Ian Sparks (Chase Williamson) decides to devote his life to fighting crime after witnessing his parents' tragic death. In a world where the only real supers have gone into hiding, he teams up and falls for fellow ass-kicker Lady Heavenly (Ashley Bell), but a terrible event sends him spiralling into darkness.

Alan Moore's *Watchmen* is obviously a touchstone, not just for the period setting, but also due to its commitment to taking the story to progressively darker places. It's unrelentingly bleak, and could perhaps do with a dash of humour



to go with its more outlandish *Dick Tracy*-esque touches, although the cast is solid, with Bell impressing in particular, and Burrows and Folino have done a great job of translating a small budget into impressive visuals.

There are issues with the pacing, however, and at times it seems more interested in defining itself rather than telling a story, but *Sparks* is a debut that packs a punch.

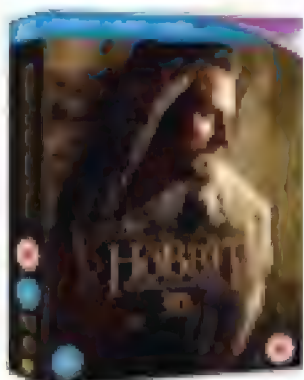
**Jonathan Hatfull**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★





## THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG Dragon-on and on

**Details** 12 // 161 mins // 2013 // **DVD** **bluetooth** **Released** Out now **Director** Peter Jackson **Cast** Martin Freeman, Benedict Cumberbatch, Richard Armitage, Evangeline Lilly, Orlando Bloom **Distributor** Warner Home Video



**The decision to** split a children's book into three films at three hours apiece came with the assurance that there

was tons of untapped material to draw on. However, while *The Desolation Of Smaug* is better than *An Unexpected Journey*, we're not convinced that it has made good on its promise.

Indeed, it doesn't wait for the washing-up to be done, ploughing head-first into a barrel and riding the rapids for the rest of the duration. There are near misses with giant spiders, grotesque orcs and stubborn elves, as the band of dwarves and their burglar race to the Lonely Mountain.

It's the place where Dr Watson comes face-to-face with Sherlock Holmes or, as they are known around Middle-Earth, Bilbo Baggins (Martin Freeman) and Smaug (Benedict Cumberbatch), the gold-thieving dragon. This portion plays out like *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows'* raid of Gringotts bank, with

added chatter and a more fearsome fire-breather. Every flicker of emotion and unfurling of a wing or claw is realised in stunning detail that holds up on the small screen.

But while Cumberbatch features in one of the movie's highlights, he also appears in an underwhelming sequence that could have been saved for the extended edition. Starring as the Necromancer, he holds Gandalf (Ian McKellen)'s interest, but not ours. The separate journey of the elderly wizard is one of many sub-plots that's weaved into this matted script like one of the dwarves' more elaborate beards.

We couldn't help but squee when Legolas (Orlando Bloom) returned for more bow-fu, and his new elvish companion Tauriel (Evangeline Lilly) added some warmth and romance to Tolkien's testosterone fest. Meanwhile, Thorin (Richard Armitage) and Bilbo are beginning to reveal a darker edge, both harbouring a weakness for shiny things. And while this franchise isn't as precious as the last, its thrall proves just as powerful.

**Jodie Tyley**  
**VERDICT** ★★☆☆

### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

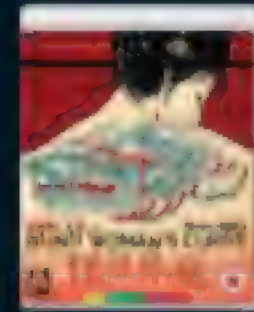


**Reign Of Fire**  
Dragons have devastated Earth, and Christian Bale and Matthew McConaughey must save humanity.

## BLIND WOMAN'S CURSE

*Blood feud*

**Details** 15 // 85 mins // 1970 // **DVD** **Released** Out now **Director** Teruo Ishii **Cast** Meiko Kaji, Hoki Tokuda, Makoto Satô **Distributor** Arrow Video



**Director Teruo Ishii** had a varied and bizarre career that took in horror, erotica and children's movies. *Blind Woman's Curse* doesn't feature anything as insane as the director was capable of, but it's certainly hard to categorise.

Yakuza leader Akemi Tachibana (Meiko Kaji) blinded a young woman during a gang fight. Now, she believes herself to be cursed, leaving her reluctant to engage in battle with her rivals, which proves to be a problem when a succession of her gang members show up dead. Is the curse real, or has the blind woman come back for her revenge?

After a stunning opening sword-fight sequence, as the rival gangs engage in rain-soaked slow-motion combat, *Blind Woman's Curse* struggles – or refuses – to find its



footing. Gang politics sit alongside slapstick comedy and bizarre dream sequences, and few of the elements really make an impression.

The horror sequences are almost certainly strongest, and Ishii puts some truly striking images on screen. However, this intriguing oddity is too inaccessible and inconsistent to find more than a fans-only audience.

**Jonathan Hatfull**  
**VERDICT** ★★☆☆

## GALLOWWALKERS *Hung out to dry*

**Details** 15 // 90 mins // 2012 // **DVD** **Released** 5 May **Director** Andrew Goth **Cast** Wesley Snipes, Kevin Howarth, Riley Smith **Distributor** Signature Entertainment



**Best known as** the film which Wesley Snipes was bonded from prison to make, the ambitious supernatural Western

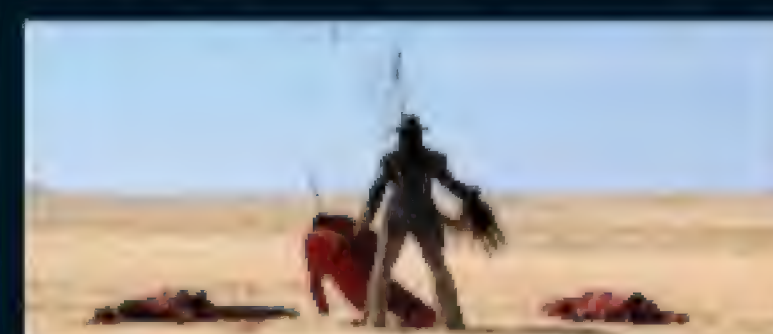
*Gallowwalkers* has one or two interesting ideas floating around but no sense of plot or direction with which to pull them together. Snipes stars as the mysterious gunslinger Aman, who lives in an area of the West where people have a tendency to rise from the grave once you put them down. He's hunting the gang who raped and murdered his girlfriend, but they have plans of their own.



There are some interesting details, like the walkers' need for fresh skin, but the story is the stuff of the most basic revenge Western movies, delivered in lengthy expository flashbacks by a bored-looking Snipes. Writer/director Andrew Goth seems more concerned with the action, but these sequences have little to offer.

A solid first ten minutes might trick you into thinking you're watching something fun, but this should be avoided.

**Jonathan Hatfull**  
**VERDICT** ★☆☆☆







Season One

# HEMLOCK GROVE Monster mash

**Details** 15 // 660 mins // **DVD** // 21 April **Creators** Brian McGreevy, Lee Shipman **Cast** Landon Liboiron, Bill Skarsgård, Famke Janssen, Dougray Scott **Distributor** Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment



**The frenzied marathon** viewing required to watch a Netflix series in its intended state leads to a dazed

and confused sense of having been through something, even if you're not quite sure what it is. This is exacerbated by the weirdness and madcap inconsistency of the Eli Roth-presented *Hemlock Grove*, which gobbles up tones, plotlines and references like a wolf in a butcher's shop.

Hirsute young gypsy werewolf Peter Rumancek (Landon Liboiron) and his mother (an on-form Lili Taylor) move to Hemlock Grove to take up residence in their late cousin's caravan. When a cheerleader is savagely murdered, suspicion quickly falls on Peter, and spoiled rich kid Roman Godfrey (Bill Skarsgård) decides to investigate. Roman has secrets of his own, but not as many as his mother Olivia (a hammy Famke Janssen).

This is a supernatural soap opera for a niche audience; a strange concoction of genre credibility and homage, often risible dialogue and genuine out-of-the-blue oddness. It's all over the place in a way that will prove exhilaratingly unpredictable to some and immensely frustrating

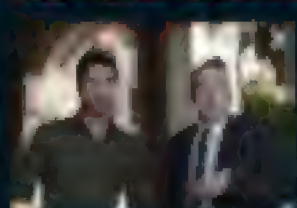
to others, although it does merit some criticism for the treatment of its female characters. The teens in particular fall into the categories of wet blanket, loud and victim-to-be, while the unacknowledged sexual tension between Peter and Roman is far more interesting.

Your enjoyment will almost certainly depend on your willingness to – and interest in – simply going along with its blend of gore, teen angst and *Dark Shadows*-levels of soapiness. It's hypnotically ludicrous, but if you're already irritated with the show, this will be a meandering and ridiculous waste of your time.

When it fails, it's a clunky and hackneyed mess. But for the bulk of the running time it's so wildly bizarre that it's oddly compulsive viewing, and yes, we would welcome a second season. Many viewers won't have the patience or the inclination for *Hemlock Grove*, but it's genuinely unusual and quite mad, and for all its faults we found it to be very watchable indeed.

**Jonathan Hatfull**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**American Horror Story**  
The first season was a slightly more successful mix of art and camp.

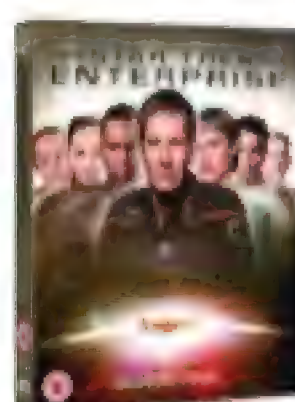


Season Four

# STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE

**Those were the voyages...**

**Details** 12 // 897 mins // **DVD** // 14 April **Creators** Rick Berman, Brannon Braga **Cast** Scott Bakula, Connor Trinneer, John Billingsley, Jolene Blalock, Dominic Keating, Anthony Montgomery **Distributor** Paramount Home Entertainment



**It's fun to** imagine an alternate universe in which *Star Trek: Enterprise* began with its fourth season. Manny Coto's

promotion to showrunner coincided with a stronger sense of the show's place in *Star Trek* continuity and distinct improvements in character development. Had the series started here it might have lasted longer than four seasons, thereby allowing Rick Berman's unfairly maligned reputation to remain intact and ensuring there was no precedent for the divisive (at least among fans) *Star Trek Into Darkness*.

Coto certainly made a good start by wisely ditching the unpopular Temporal Cold War subplot and bringing the crew back to Earth for a refit, where they are lauded for saving humanity from the Xindi. As an intelligent counterpoint to this, though, Archer finally ponders the moral compromises that success required. A swift clinch with an ex-lover restores his self-belief, however, and he's

soon taking Enterprise out on a mission to fill holes in *Trek* history, starting with the augments. Brent Spiner's guest role ensures that this is entertaining, but his superhumans have a familiar Achilles heel and are made less intimidating by daft costumes.

On this shaky ground the promising start inevitably falters in the face of further stale clichés. Never are these more evident than in a three-part story beginning with 'Babel One' that sets up the birth of the Federation. Despite the grand objective, its predictable twists generate less suspense than a synchronised swimming contest. What's more, it rests on the crew being drawn once again into someone else's conflict when they should be trekking across the final frontier.

Towards the season's end, 'In A Mirror, Darkly' provides one more reason to sit up and take notice. Yet, the very fact that a story that apes *The Original Series* is a highlight rather than a novelty reinforces the notion that *Star Trek: Enterprise*, even at its best, couldn't survive on its own.

**Michael Simpson**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**Falling Skies**  
This alien invasion series also got off to a cliché-ridden start, but after two seasons it took off.





Hemlock Grove // Star Trek: Enterprise // Doctor Who: Dark Eyes 2 // Doctor Who: The Brood Of Erys // Doctor Who: White Ghosts



## DOCTOR WHO: DARK EYES 2

**Must hear now!**

The eyes have it

**Details** 300 mins // 2013 // CD, MP3 // **Released** Out now **Director** Nicholas Briggs **Writers** Nicholas Briggs, Alan Barnes, Matt Fitton **Sound Design** Wilfredo Acosta **Music** Wilfredo Acosta **Cast** Paul McGann, Ruth Bradley, Nicola Walker, Alex MacQueen, David Sibley, Nicholas Briggs **Distributor** Big Finish



**Picking up shortly** after 2012's Eighth Doctor epic *Dark Eyes*, this four-part sequel underarms you right into a story you've missed out on both the beginning and the end of.

First adventure 'The Traitor', which re-introduces Liv Chenka (*Spooks*' Nicola Walker), last seen in Seventh Doctor audio *Robophobia*, shows the grim reality of a world under Dalek occupation, and comes packed with nods to *Dalek Invasion Of Earth*. Raising far more questions than it answers, part two – although more complete – also seems to come out of nowhere, reuniting Paul McGann's elemental and otherworldly Time Lord with no-nonsense World War I companion Molly O'Sullivan (*Primeval* and *Grabbers*' Ruth Bradley) before the third part returns Chenka to the fore, and slowly the answers we're craving begin to make themselves known. It's the sort of story that can only really be told with a time-travelling, universal-spanning immortal, and the pace picks up so much in the creepy 1918 of

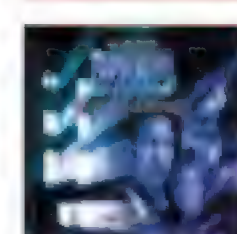
second adventure 'The White Room' that you're just happy to go along with it, riding the adrenaline right into the end-of-the-universe cosmic horror of the overly ambitious third part, 'Time's Horizon'. In both subject and tone, it's a cross between TV story *The Waters Of Mars* and Paul WS Anderson's overlooked *Event Horizon*.

Perhaps emboldened by McGann's role in the *Day Of The Doctor* prequel, the fourth segment, 'The Eyes Of The Master' reintroduces Alex MacQueen (*The Thick Of It*)'s oily take on the Master from *UNIT: Dominion*, and rather than alluding to the forthcoming Time War – and Eight's role in it – comes right out and plants its flag proudly on BBC Wales' borders, with the Master set up as the desperate agent of last resort should the Time Lords need to do the unthinkable.

This is both Big Finish's *Empire Strikes Back* – the more morally complex, thematically mature middle rung of a clear arc – and Big Finish's *Revenge Of The Sith* – tapping that rich vein of storytelling plutonium that links Eight into the 2005 TV series.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

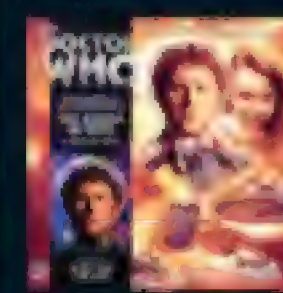


**The Chimes Of Midnight**  
McGann's finest audios of the Charlie Pollard era, equally complex and equally willing to play around with time.

## DOCTOR WHO: THE BROOD OF ERYs

Daddy's little world

**Details** 120 mins // CD, MP3 // **Released** Out now **Director** Nicholas Briggs **Writer** Andrew Smith **Sound Design** Steve Foxon **Music** Steve Foxon **Cast** Colin Baker, Lisa Greenwood, Nicola Sian, Tori Hart, Chris Overton, Brian Shelley, Glynn Sweet **Distributor** Big Finish

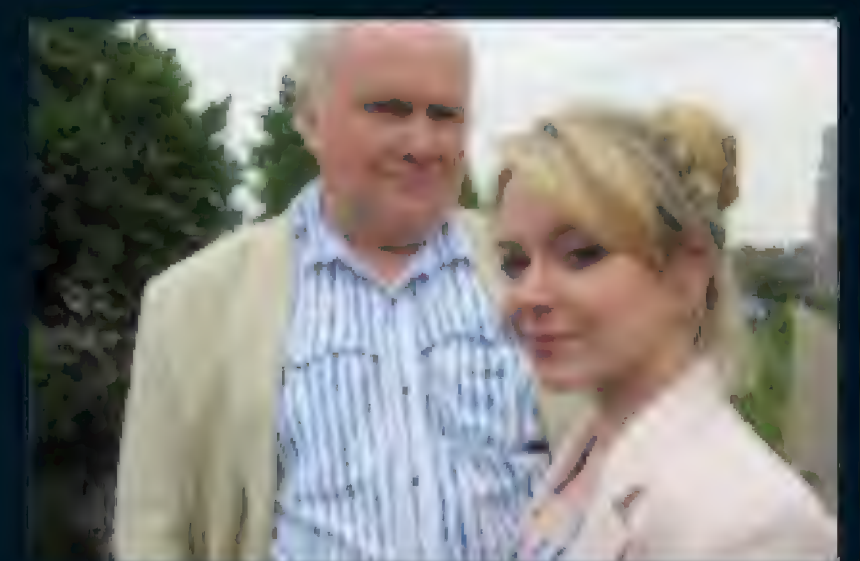


**Big Finish** has offered Colin Baker plenty of opportunities to revise even the most hostile reading of his Doctor,

but *The Brood Of Erys* isn't one.

Written by Andrew Smith, the architect of TV fable *Full Circle*, this full-cast audio has a similar twist, similar mud-monsters and drags some of its worst excesses straight from the mid-Eighties *Doctor Who* playbook.

Baker has proven that his Doctor's abrasive attitude can be a cutting tool, and not just a bludgeon, but here his dialogue largely consists of Yaffling hmmmphs and condescension – especially of companion Flip (Lisa Greenwood), who seems to exist only to ask for



things the listener can't see to be described to her.

Buried in the last half are some ideas about the duty of a parent, and a lovely character moment from the Doctor as he recalls letting Susan go, but there's a lot of sub-*Star Trek: The Original Series* clichés about living planets and tricky space goblins before you get there.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

## DOCTOR WHO: WHITE GHOSTS

Space and vine

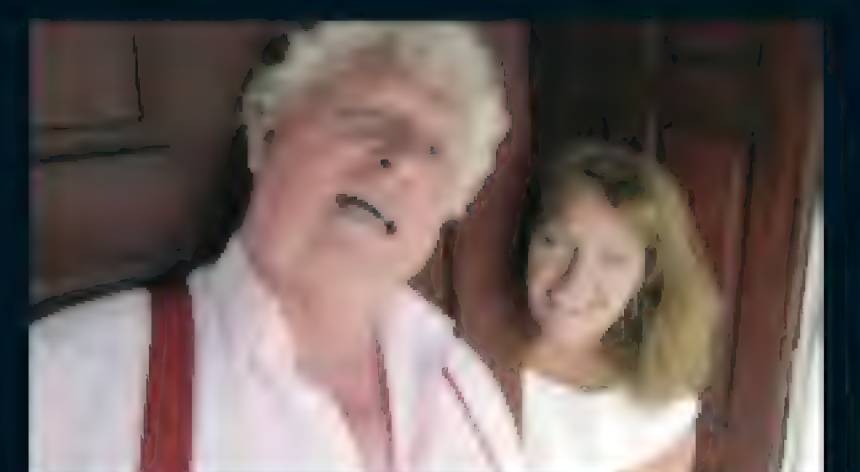
**Details** 60 mins // CD, MP3 // **Released** Out now **Director** Nicholas Briggs **Writer** Alan Barnes **Sound Design** Jamie Robertson **Music** Jamie Robertson **Cast** Tom Baker, Louise Jameson, Virginia Hey, Bethan Walker, Gbemisola Ikumelo, James Joyce **Distributor** Big Finish



**As if getting Tom Baker** back wasn't a coup enough, Big Finish has eclipsed the static and stodgy

AudioGo Fourth Doctor stories through sheer character dynamic.

*White Ghosts* is a perfect example – the story isn't that innovative; it's a simple, albeit incredible atmospheric 'base under siege' with a couple of twists – a planet of darkness, carnivorous plants that go berserk in the light, and a research team conducting experiments within experiments – but the Doctor's banter with returning TV companion Leela (Louise Jameson) is perfect. It's like the last four decades just haven't



happened, which for Seventies *Doctor Who* fans is excellent news.

Virginia Hey adds class with a sharp performance you'd be pushed to recognise as her, but it's Jameson who shines, adding subtle layers to Leela's once clichéd 'alien savage', and Baker who wins your heart the second his baritone 'Ahhh!' booms through the speakers.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★







# LIGHTNING RETURNS: FINAL FANTASY XIII

SciFiNow  
Must  
play now!

Lightning's back, and we still don't care

**Format** Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 // **Age rating** 16 // **Publisher** Square Enix // **Developer** In-house // **Players** 1 // **Released** Out now // **Price** £39.99 // **Downloadable** No



**At this point,** we are pretty happy to see the reign of *Final Fantasy XIII* come to an end. As original protagonist Lightning sets out on her last adventure, she manages to fix some of the problems that have plagued the series over the console generation, but fails to deliver something truly worthy of the franchise's title.

Lightning has travelled through time, having been tasked with saving the souls of as many humans as possible in 13 days as the world comes to an end. It's the sort of high-fantasy nonsense that has become synonymous with Japanese RPGs in the last decade, but this setup does actually succeed in streamlining the often confusing *Final Fantasy XIII* series.

It doesn't take long to get into the action; a short tutorial is the only thing between you and the game's four beautiful main locations. *Lightning Returns* is without a doubt one of the best-looking games to grace the system – you certainly won't need much convincing to dive into each area and complete as many quests (and save as many souls) as you can before time runs out.

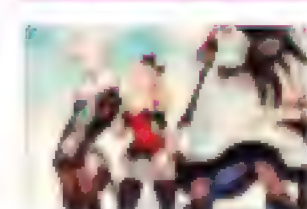
The time mechanic presents an interesting shift to the established *Final Fantasy* formula, pushing you to multi-task as you balance soul saving and time-specific quests. The plot and structure is relatively organic and open, and it's certainly a refreshing approach.

Square Enix has also taken the opportunity to experiment with the battle system. *Lightning Returns* represents a shift into action-RPG territory, stripping away the party system as we've known it and handing the player full control of Lightning's movement in combat. Instead of switching characters, you scroll between costumes, granting the protagonist a variety of combat roles and power sets. You're able to change up your look and style three times in a battle, with each face button acting as a different ability. It's surprisingly fluid, frenetic and incredibly fun, and markedly different from the classic ATB battle system found in the PlayStation-era games, but is undeniably engaging all the same.

We didn't ask for another game in the *Final Fantasy XIII* series, but we are glad that Square delivered. The narrative wraps up fairly well, all things considered, and its cameo-filled running time will certainly draw a smile from anyone with at least a passing interest in the trilogy. *Lightning Returns* is one of the most subjective entries ever under the *Final Fantasy* name, but underneath the negativity is an enjoyable and complex RPG.

**Josh West**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



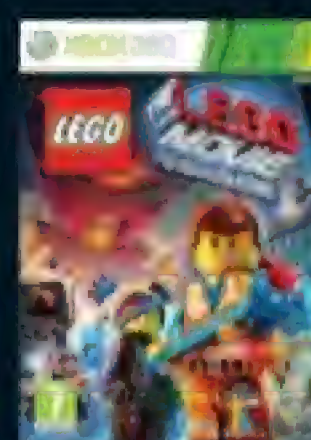
**Bravely Default**  
One of the best RPGs of recent years, it's essentially a *Final Fantasy* game in all but name.



# THE LEGO MOVIE VIDEOGAME

Everything is  
not awesome

**Format** Multi // **Age rating** 7 // **Publisher** Warner Bros // **Developer** TT Games // **Players** 1-4 // **Released** Out now // **Price** £39.99 // **Downloadable** Yes



**Coming off of** the back of *LEGO Marvel Super Heroes*, expectations were running sky high, with TT Games having seemingly

rediscovered its spark and produced one of 2013's most entertaining all-ages releases. While *The LEGO Movie Videogame* still delivers the same core experience that you've come to expect and more than a few laughs along the way, it feels restrained by the movie it is so closely tied with.

Sure, you'll find the same brick-smashing, character-collecting, score-chasing gameplay that has become synonymous with a TT Games release; its problem is that it is slavishly wrapped around *The LEGO Movie*. However, the game's devotion to the 90-minute script happens to be its undoing. You'll certainly have some laughs whether you've seen the movie or not, although those going in blind will find many of the film's best jokes ruined; the intended pacing of *The LEGO Movie* does not transpose well to the videogame format.

We've had a lot of fun jumping into these movie tie-in worlds in the

past. In fact, TT Games has found wonderful success in adapting Hogwarts, Middle-Earth and Gotham to smash up with gleeful abandon. Here, on the other hand, we are stuck in areas that draw inspiration from LEGO sets from across the ages. It starts off wildly mundane, although the later levels will become so wickedly nonsensical that you'll struggle to hold back a smile. Perhaps this is the problem with *The LEGO Movie Videogame*; it's wholly unoriginal. We adored *Super Heroes* for its unwavering fan-service and incredible sense of humour towards the source material, but the content is entirely contrived here. Clips from the film are played during cut-scenes, dialogue is reused, and the game rarely threatens to make its own jokes.

*The LEGO Movie Videogame* is fun, but doesn't have the same mass appeal as the other games from TT Games. Seeing famous worlds reimagined with the LEGO magic is half the appeal, and this is severely lacking in the magic department. Regardless, if you enjoyed the film and are looking for something fun to play with alongside your kids then you can't really go wrong here.

**Josh West**  
**VERDICT** ★★★★★

## IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**LEGO Marvel Superheroes**  
One of the funniest games released last year, it's wonderfully entertaining.



Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII // The LEGO Movie Videogame // The Walking Dead // Thief // South Park: The Stick Of Truth



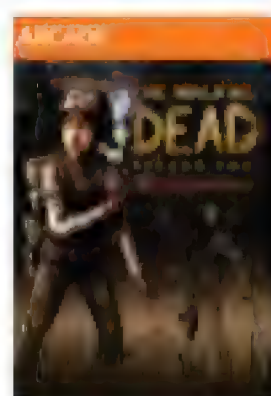
Season Two

## THE WALKING DEAD: A HOUSE DIVIDED

Sci-Fi Now  
Must play now!

Calm before the storm

**Format** Multi // **Age rating** 15 // **Publisher** Telltale Games // **Developer** In-house  
**Players** 1 // **Released** Out now // **Downloadable** Yes



**Telltale's adaptation of *The Walking Dead*** has found wonderful success in delicately tiptoeing the line between the calm

and the storm. After the lacklustre opening chapter, which seemed to place more credence on adrenaline-pumping set pieces over the quieter character moments that came to define the first season, we were beginning to worry that Telltale had fully embraced the storm. Thankfully, *A House Divided* sees the studio deliver one of the best episodes to date – and we don't make that claim lightly.

After the heart-wrenching introduction to Season Two, an opportunity to catch our breath is certainly a welcomed change of pace. Clementine is recovering from the horrific events of the previous season, which finally lets us explore the new status quo and spend some quality time with the new band of survivors that has rallied around our little zombie-slaying warrior. Telltale also finds some clever

ways to play with our expectations, recalling old friends in surprising ways.

*A House Divided* finds smart ways to quietly wrench up the tension; the end of the episode will have you desperately hoping it doesn't take Telltale three months to get the next episode out of the door. The majority of this two-hour episode is spent in conversation, with enough moments of intense action peppered throughout to keep you on the edge of your seat. It's a far cry away from the gore-fest scenes of the opening chapter, but when the action arrives, it hits like a hurricane.

Episode One felt lost, like it was trying to establish too much character and tone too quickly for its own good, but *A House Divided* succeeds on almost every level. The technical glitches that have become synonymous with Telltale products still remain, but the pacing and character moments are so sublime that you'll hardly care. Telltale's take on *The Walking Dead* has more energy, clever narrative tricks, and raw momentum than Robert Kirkman's source material has had in years.

Josh West

VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



**The Wolf Among Us**  
Telltale's brooding take on *Fables* is heavier than *The Walking Dead*, but just as enjoyable.

## THIEF

Lost in shadow

**Format** Multi // **Age rating** 15 // **Publisher** Square Enix // **Developer** Eidos Montreal  
**Players** 1 // **Released** Out now // **Downloadable** Yes

Becoming a master thief isn't nearly as difficult as you might expect – at least that's what you'll come to learn as you step into the boots of Garrett, a loveable rogue with a penchant for leather and shadowy hideouts who heads up the re-imagining of stealth classic *Thief*. It's been a decade since we last took a trip into The City, and plenty has changed, plunging into a deep depression fuelled by poverty and sickness – which is surprising considering the amount of loot on every street corner and rooftop.

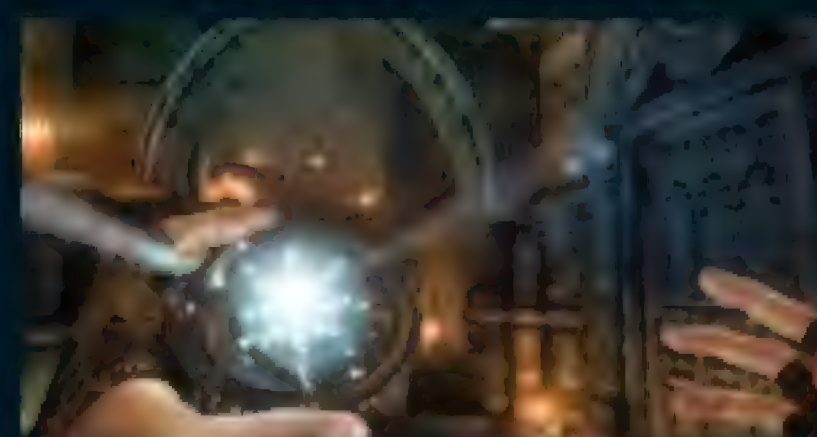
*Thief* is without question a sign of the changing times. *Dishonored*

showed up to the party early and stole its thunder – exercising fresh gameplay mechanics and quirky level design within the template the original *Thief* established so long ago. The problem is, re-imagined *Thief* struggles to find its feat. The complexity of the series has been lost, replaced with a *Call Of Duty*-inspired 'follow-the-objective-marker' leading the way to lining your pockets with silver. It's terribly unimaginative, and at times struggles to hold a wandering attention span.

It's a shame, because not only is it one hell of a pretty game – with fairly staggering attention to detail – but solid mechanics are hiding away in the shadows. We only wish *Thief* had the courage to step out of them every once in a while.

Josh West

VERDICT ★★★★★



## SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

Uninhibited

Sci-Fi Now  
Must play now!

**Format** Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 // **Age rating** 18 // **Publisher** Ubisoft  
**Developer** Obsidian // **Players** 1 // **Released** Out now // **Downloadable** No

We could spend hours discussing the achievements and pitfalls of Obsidian's *South Park: The Stick Of Truth*, but it's one of the easiest buying decisions you'll make all year: have you ever enjoyed *South Park*? Are you easily offended? Do you want 12 hours of passion-fuelled fan service coursing through your eyes? If you answered Yes, No and Yes, then congratulations, we may have just discovered a contender for game of the year.

*The Stick Of Truth* is every *South Park* fan's dream. Taking on the role of the new kid, you are thrust into a town-spanning *Dungeons & Dragons*

meets *Game Of Thrones*-inspired fight for the coveted Stick Of Truth.

Obsidian has crafted a wildly entertaining RPG – albeit one with a relatively shallow *Final Fantasy*-inspired turn-based battle system – and wrapped the *South Park* license around it. There are an incredible amount characters from the show, although they aren't there for the sake of an easy joke. Everything makes sense, especially within the crazy borders of *South Park*.

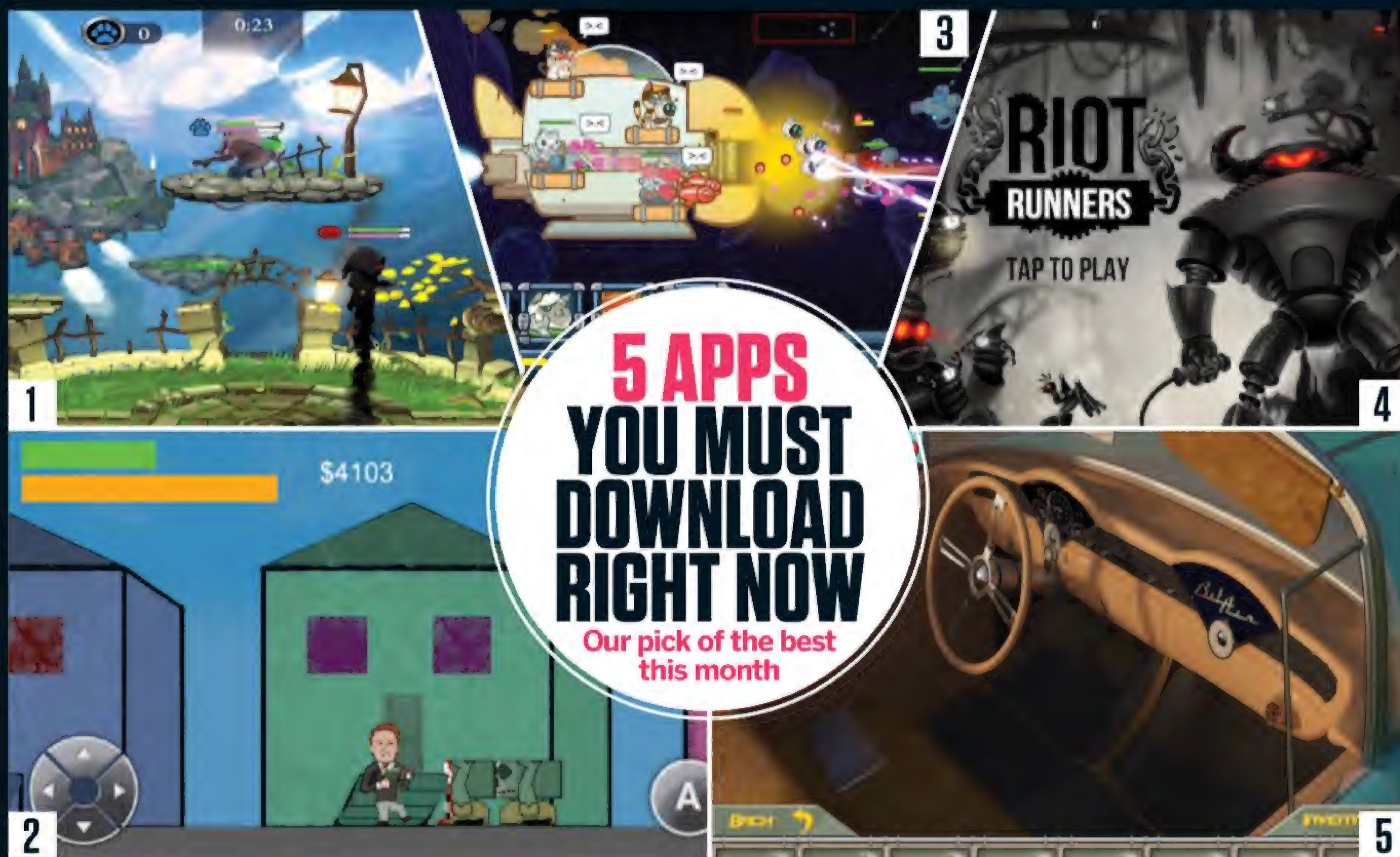
*The Stick Of Truth* is a genuinely laugh-out-loud experience that doesn't pull any punches, and we're surprised and delighted that Ubisoft managed to sneak so much lewd content past the ratings board. As long as you're a fan of the show, you'll have an incredibly entertaining time.

Josh West

VERDICT ★★★★★

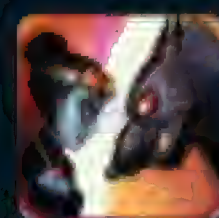






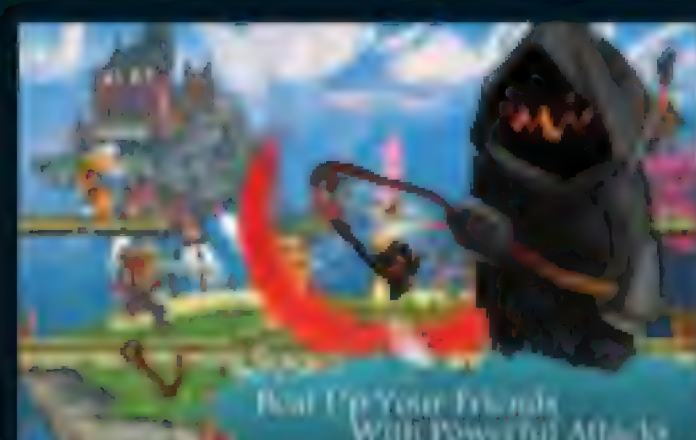
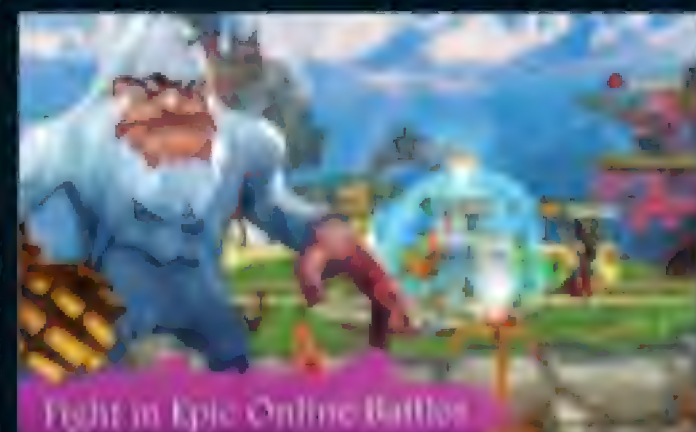
## FRIGHT FIGHT – MULTIPLAYER BRAWLER

FOR: IOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



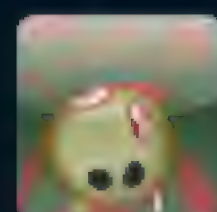
**1** For those craving an old-fashioned punch-up, this will be right up your alley. Take on a mix of horror, fantasy and steampunk characters in a variety of environments, looking out for platforms to jump on to dodge blows. The only downside is that there's no single-player mode, so you have to face strangers in battle or persuade your friends to join you.

**BEST FOR:** BATTLES



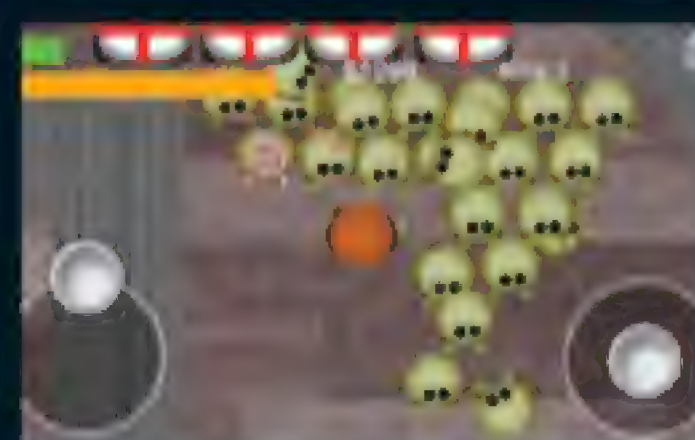
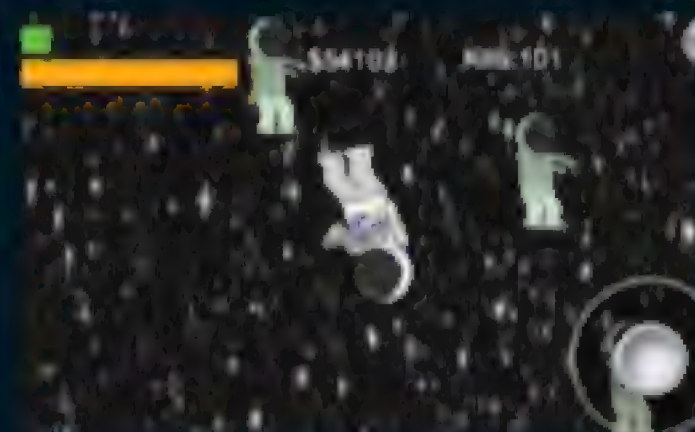
## CUBICLE WORKER ZOMBIE SLAYER

FOR: IOS  
PRICE: £1.49/\$1.99



**2** The world has become overrun with zombies, and you're at the office, so you grab the only weapon available – a stapler – and fend off the undead hordes. It's effective so long as the brain-eaters are close enough to be hit, but fortunately there are opportunities to scavenge and buy other weapons. You'll also find health kits and food and a variety of strange levels, including a trip to space.

**BEST FOR:** GAMERS WITH A GSOH



## NAUGHTY KITTIES

FOR: IOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



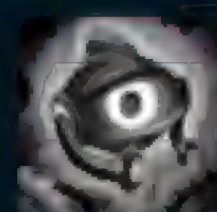
**3** Combining tower defence and endless runner games, this addictive app also features a bunch of adorable kittens. The Cat's Planet is under attack, and you must defend it from alien invaders. Each feline comes with their own skills, including a grey cat armed with a bazooka. But keep an eye on their energy levels, as they need swapping regularly. This is the perfect game for a generation that loved defence games and emailing each other images of grumpy cats.

**BEST FOR:** CAT LOVERS



## RIOT RUNNERS

FOR: IOS  
PRICE: £0.69/\$0.99



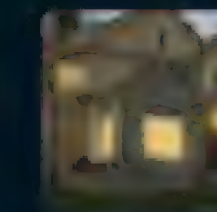
**4** We hit the download button as soon as we locked eyes on these gorgeous steampunk visuals. You play as the Brave Robots fleeing from the Evil Enslavers that are hot on their heels. Tap to jump or double-tap to go higher and avoid obstacles like saw blades in your bid for freedom, but run full-pelt into coins so that you can purchase more robots and power-ups. While *Riot Runners* is far from groundbreaking, the moody visuals will spur you on to cross the finishing line.

**BEST FOR:** MARATHON RUNNERS



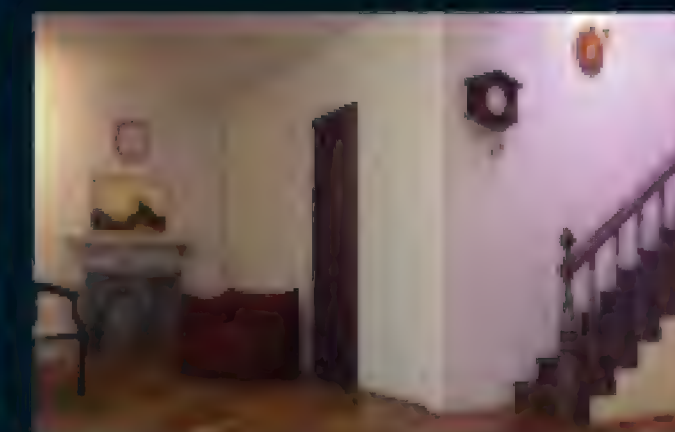
## MYSTERY OF MIRROR OF DEATH

FOR: IOS/ANDROID  
PRICE: FREE



**5** Play detective in this puzzle game that investigates the disappearance of writer JR Thompson. There's a supernatural twist, however, as it seems linked to a mirror Thompson believed brought him success. You'll be filled in on the details when you launch the app, before solving riddles as you try to find your way around a house. The lack of clues means only experienced gamers need apply.

**BEST FOR:** PUZZLE SOLVERS





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## The Left Hand of Darkness

A CLASSIC OF SCIENCE FICTION

This Issue  
We Read:  
The Left Hand  
Of Darkness

Turn to page 86 to see why, and let  
us know what you think



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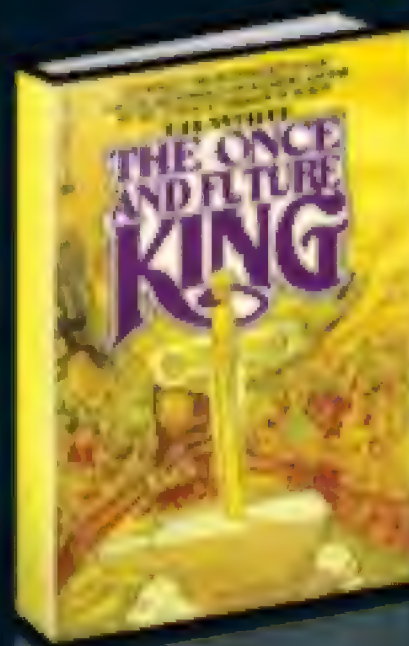
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Let us know what you want  
to see. This is your section, so  
tell us what you think

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Submit your review as a 300-  
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Next  
We'll Be  
Reading:  
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Future King



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author with our  
Essential Read.



WORDS  
MATTHEW  
HANDRAHAN

# ESSENTIAL READ: THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS

SCIENCE FICTION WAS A GHETTO, POPULATED AND CONTROLLED BY MEN. BUT WHERE MOST FEMALE AUTHORS SAW HOSTILITY, URSULA K LE GUIN SENSED AN OPPORTUNITY...

© Marion Wood Kolisch



Science fiction authors can be divided into two groups: those that fret over being labelled 'a science fiction author,'

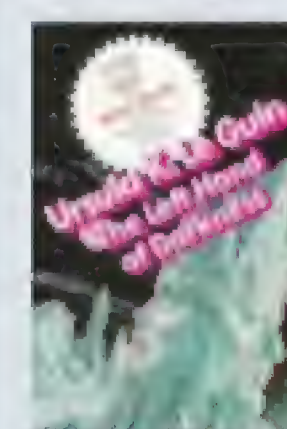
and those that don't. The latter group fit the genre like a glove, proud to work within its generous confines. The latter can take different forms, but seen from a distance they all appear to be drawing from the same well of anxiety. Perhaps it's an author like Margaret Atwood, who has frequently argued that her work falls just beyond the walls of the science fiction 'ghetto'. Or maybe it's someone like Ursula K Le Guin, who bristles when anyone treats the place in which she works as 'a ghetto' in the first place.

"I am so tired of talking about the shameless ignorance of people who put down science fiction and fantasy without having read it or known what they were reading when they did," she told *Time's* Lev Grossman. Not that you'd know it, of course, because even a brief survey of Le Guin's interviews and writings over the last 20 years will reveal a stream of rants and jeremiads on that very subject. She acknowledges the value of genre and believes in its power and potential, but the abiding impression is that Le Guin has found something missing from how her work is perceived and the context in which it is celebrated.

If so then kudos, because few science fiction authors are so deserving of the



## SYNOPSIS



When the ancient civilisation of Hain disappeared, so too did its reasons for seeding human colonies in the furthest reaches of space. For millennia,

those colonies grew and evolved independently, entirely unaware of the others' existence, until the day new technologies were discovered that could once again build links across the expanse of the galaxy. As the colonies unite, a new order is formed to reach out and bring more into the fold: the Ekumen.

Genly Ai is sent by the Ekumen to Gethen, a frigid world inhabited by people whose gender constantly shuffles between different states: neutral for the most of the time, and then, once a month, they adopt male or female characteristics and mate during a period known as 'Kemmer'. It is a world quite unlike any Genly Ai has seen before; a world without men or women, a world that has never known war, but still has problems of its own.



riches and recognition that lie beyond the ghetto walls. She has a few dozen awards and an army of high-profile devotees, from members of the literary elite like Salman Rushdie and John Updike to the cool kids of genre dabbling like David Mitchell and Michael Chabon. She didn't just write within a genre; she altered the genre's parameters. Le Guin made the science fiction ghetto a more spacious and tastefully decorated place to be.

The genre today is certainly a more pleasing spectacle than it was in Le Guin's youth. Like so many 11-year-old kids in 1940, she read the pulps and gawped at the wonders inside, even submitting a story to *Astounding* – which was rejected, incidentally. But as she grew older her expectations evolved and deepened. All of a sudden, she didn't care much for what she saw.

"Particularly in the Thirties and Forties, science fiction could be embarrassingly badly written. Shamelessly badly written," she said in an interview with *The Paris Review*, remarking that many of the male writers of that era "prided themselves on writing that way. They were idea writers, and they weren't going to fiddle with the feminine frippery of style." And when the style was tolerable, the political and sociological messages often weren't. As Le Guin later told *The Guardian*, she came to see most science fiction as "hardware and soldiers" underpinned by "conservative assumptions: white men go forth and conquer the universe."

While these ideas were an everyday reality to the vast majority of the residents of the United States, Le Guin's life

experience was very different. Her father was Alfred Kroeber, the recipient of the first doctorate in anthropology ever awarded by Columbia University, the curator of the University of California's anthropological museum and a cornerstone in the foundations of Berkeley's anthropology department. Alfred's legacy was assured on the day in 1911 when a Native American named Ishi, the last of the Yahi tribe, wandered out of the wilderness and chose to spend his remaining days at Berkeley. Le Guin's mother, Theodora, a trained clinical psychologist, later wrote a bestselling account of the events called *Ishi In Two Worlds*.

Inside the Le Guin household, different creeds and cultures were not a source of fear; they were to be embraced, observed and investigated – a million miles from the prevailing attitudes of the time. Esteemed academics and European intellectuals were constant visitors to her Berkeley home, and the summers were spent on a ranch in California's Napa Valley, where Native Americans were regular guests at the dining table. "One of them, Juan Dolores, was a Papago, or O'odham – he was a real family friend," she recalled to *The Paris Review*. "So we sort of had this Indian uncle. Just having these people from a truly other culture – it was a tremendous gift." Her experiences allowed her to see the world, "from the point of view of the conquered," a perspective not often

explored by the science fiction authors of the Thirties and Forties.

So when she discovered her knack for prose and poetry and innate pleasure at a well-chosen word, science fiction seemed like the least hospitable environment for her talent. However, Le Guin's early stories received little interest from literary magazines and even less financial compensation. When she sold a time-travel short to *Fantastic* in 1962, the realities of making a living as a writer all of a sudden became blindingly clear. If she was to write science fiction, she would try to do it her way.

And there had never been a better time for iconoclastic thinking in science fiction. As Le Guin later pointed out to *The Guardian*, the Sixties sired a generation of new writers who were "not interested in space conquest or wiring, but using the form as a wonderful box of fixed metaphors you can play with endlessly, like a musician with a sonata." Her own vision would take a lesson or two from *The Lord Of The Rings* author JRR Tolkien in how entire worlds and histories could be created through evocative names and telling details. But its deepest roots were in the life she was afforded by her anthropologist parents, and what that taught her about human nature. Aliens are a rare sight in Le Guin's best work. She came to see her worlds as "thought experiments," and saw no reason to ➤

**"LIFE OUTSIDE THE PALE, AND UNDER THE RADAR, CAN BE GOOD"** URSULA K LE GUIN



While writing *The Left Hand Of Darkness*, the women's liberation movement had become a significant force, and Le Guin's own exploration of gender reflected that.

## 5 Reasons to read... *The Left Hand Of Darkness*

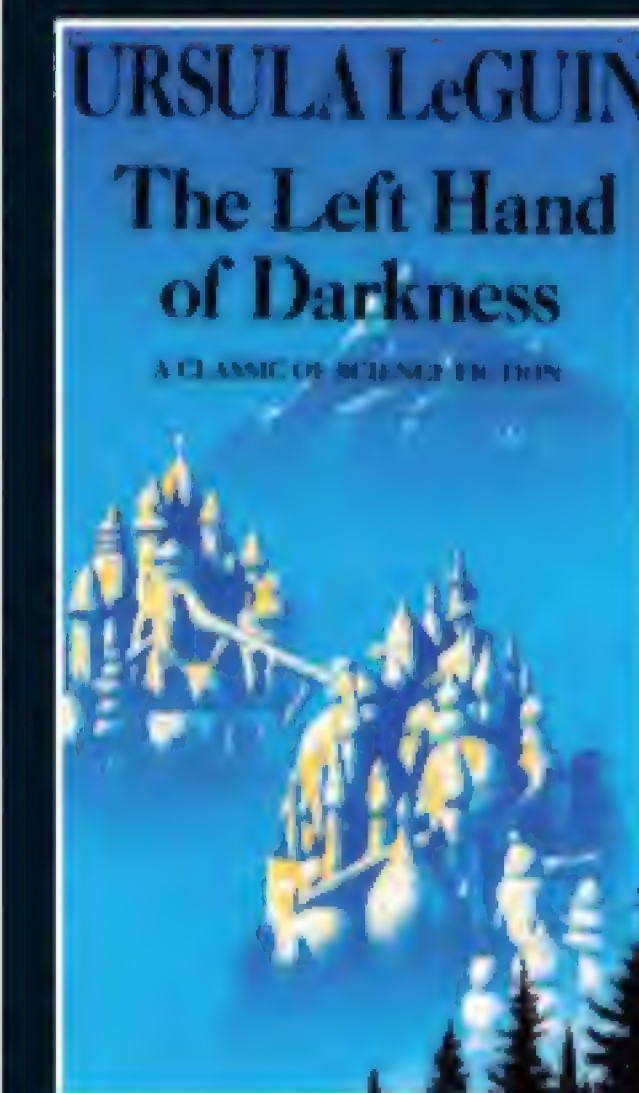
**1** Before the Sixties, science fiction was very much a boy's club. Le Guin was not alone in changing that, but her consummate skill made her as vital as any writer since Mary Shelley in opening the door for female authors.

**2** Gender is the novel's main focus, but Le Guin committed another subversive act when she gave her protagonist dark skin. She wanted to put the largely white readership of science fiction into a black character's head and then pull back the curtain.

**3** Le Guin had a distaste for labels of all kinds, even those applied to genres. *The Left Hand Of Darkness* broke through to the mainstream audience and literary critics, and she has never stopped trying to break down those barriers.

**4** The Hainish cycle, of which this book is a part, is based on an ingenious concept that effectively allows humans to assume the roles normally occupied by alien species, creating a more intimate link between the reader and the character.

**5** Le Guin would improve even on the high standards she set in *The Left Hand Of Darkness*. Even now, at the age of 84, she continues to write brave and challenging novels.

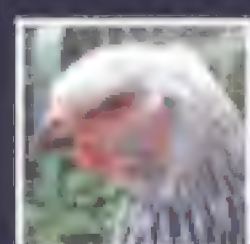


*The Left Hand Of Darkness* barely scratches the surface of her work.

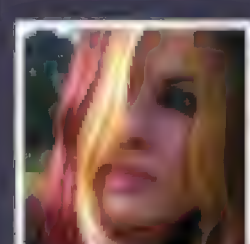


## Your Take On The Classic

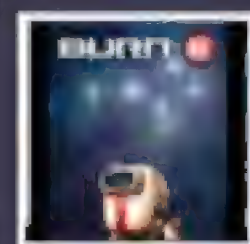
WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"I read it and it's brilliant. Love #UrsulaLeGuin, have been a huge fan ever since my first #Earthsea book. #BookClub" @Chinnie777



"I'm re-reading it right now! The book that got me hooked on LeGuin. Gender, culture, adventure and sci fi. A classic. #BookClub" @Steppenfreak



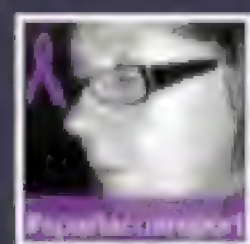
"Excellent book, reread it recently. It's not all gender role commentary, there's also lots of survival adventure. #BookClub" @THEBURNSUNIT999



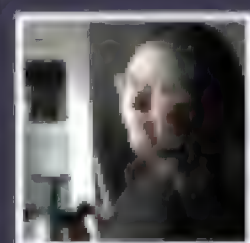
"It's a little dated but still a great read .... #BookClub" @Roundballnz



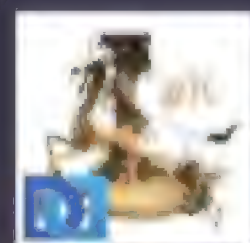
"The Left Hand Of Darkness has some of my favourite lines in it... it's a bit sexist. Brilliant though. #BookClub" @chriswhitewrite



"I bought it a while back in a charity shop. Then lost it. #oops #BookClub" @liveotherwise

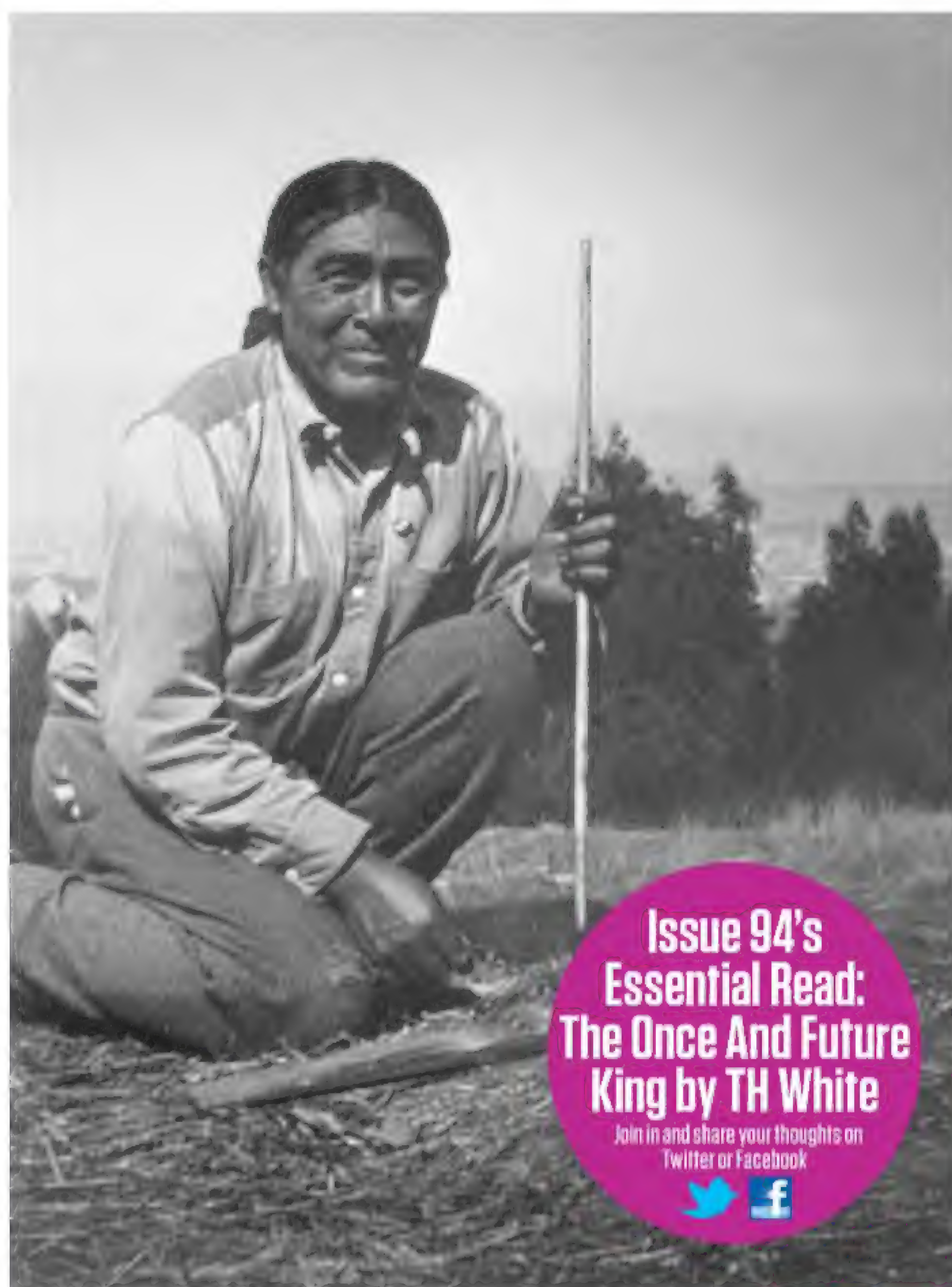


"I was expecting something difficult, but turned out to be a really great read. Love LeGuin. #BookClub" @crazyjane13



"Although I'm not as fond of it as the Earthsea Trilogy I still found it as thought provoking and interesting. #BookClub" @tehtwinnercat

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



Issue 94's Essential Read: The Once And Future King by TH White

Join in and share your thoughts on Twitter or Facebook



conduct these experiments on any race that didn't actually exist.

*The Left Hand Of Darkness* may be the fourth published novel in Le Guin's celebrated Hainish cycle, but it was arguably the first in which her unique voice could be heard. Set in a remote colony of humans that developed in total isolation from other outposts scattered across space – Gethen, one of many such colonies in the Hainish universe – Le Guin was free to choose the distinct features and attributes that would allow her to explore and subvert prevalent issues in the real world.

"Subversion doesn't suit people who, feeling their adjustment to life has been successful, want things to go on just as they are, or people who need support from authority assuring them that things are as they have to be," she later wrote in an essay titled 'It Doesn't Have To Be The Way It Is'. "Fantasy [and science fiction] not only asks 'What if things didn't go on just as they do?' but demonstrates what they might be like if they went otherwise – thus gnawing at the very foundation of the belief that things have to be the way they are."

As a woman establishing her reputation in a genre that had been dominated by men ever since she was old enough to read, the subject of scrutiny for *The Left Hand Of Darkness* was perhaps inevitable. The people of Gethen would have fluid sexual identities; neither male nor female at any given time, but able to take on the traits of both for specific periods. Discussion of gender within the counterculture was widespread, but through science fiction Le Guin was able to take imaginative leaps that the constraints of traditional realism denied other, more esteemed authors.

"I see, now, that being a woman in a powerfully and consciously masculinist field, and writing a literature ignored and despised by academic and literary critics, I had a rare freedom," she said in an interview with *Wave Composition*. "Life outside the pale, and under the radar, can be good: Masculism, criticism, who cares? Let's go!"

Even when read today, some 45 years after its original publication, *The Left Hand Of Darkness* still contains fascinating insights into the role of gender in the

# "I AM SO TIRED OF TALKING ABOUT THE SHAMELESS IGNORANCE OF PEOPLE WHO PUT DOWN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY WITHOUT HAVING READ IT"

URSULA K LE GUIN

development of a society. Le Guin never hectors the reader or allows an agenda to overtake the story and characters; rather, she extrapolates from her central conceit in much the same way that Isaac Asimov or Arthur C Clarke would have done with some new technological breakthrough or scientific theory. Le Guin may have more raw literary talent than the average author of science fiction or fantasy, but her work is just as rigorous and logical in its own way.

And yet she would soon look back on the book with regret. Le Guin underestimated the degree to which masculinity was ingrained in the culture, so deep that it remained hidden even to an enlightened mind. Without realising it, she had slipped into a way of writing she assumed the novel was at least challenging, if not entirely leaving behind. In her prose, the supposedly androgynous Gethen are all referred to as 'he', have only heterosexual relationships, and are rarely seen occupying traditionally feminine roles.

"Writing was something that men set the rules for, and I had never questioned that. The women who questioned those rules were too revolutionary for me even to know about them," she told *The Paris Review*. "I knew just enough to realise that gender itself was coming into question. We didn't have the language yet to say that gender is a social construction, which is how we shorthand it now; gender had been thrown into the arena where science fiction goes in search of interesting subjects to revisit and re-question. I thought, 'Well, gee, nobody's done that.'"

The final proof lay in how the book was received. Throughout its creation, Le Guin was certain that the subversive gender politics at the heart of the story would alienate male readers, and therefore the majority of the science fiction audience. "I thought the guys would hate it," she said. As it turned out, the opposite was true; her





Ishi, the last of the Yahi, was close to Le Guin's mother, sparking an interest in different cultures and perspectives.

most vocal critics were progressive women and feminists, who saw only capitulation where Le Guin had believed herself to be brave. She could not bring herself to disagree with their assessment, particularly when the crusty old men of the science fiction establishment had embraced *The Left Hand Of Darkness* so tightly.

"I guess the purest moment of triumph I've had was the night a long-distance phone call came through to our cabin in the Coast Range," she recalled in an interview with *Guernica* magazine. "It was my agent telling me, through a lot of static, that *Left Hand* had won the Hugo Award, on top of the Nebula earlier that summer.

"After the kids were in bed, I went and sat on a boulder over the noisy creek in the dark by myself, and thought about the years to come – what I might go on to write, making all sort of naive promises to myself to do it as well as I could. That was a good hour by the creek, under the stars."

It would not be absurd to suggest that Ursula K Le Guin, as we know her today, was forged in that quiet hour out by the creek. She had set her talent to the task of bringing something new to a genre with more potential than it had ever been allowed to realise, but it was clear that she had longer to travel to reach her destination. A moment of triumph leavened by the desire to improve, to next time take the road less travelled.

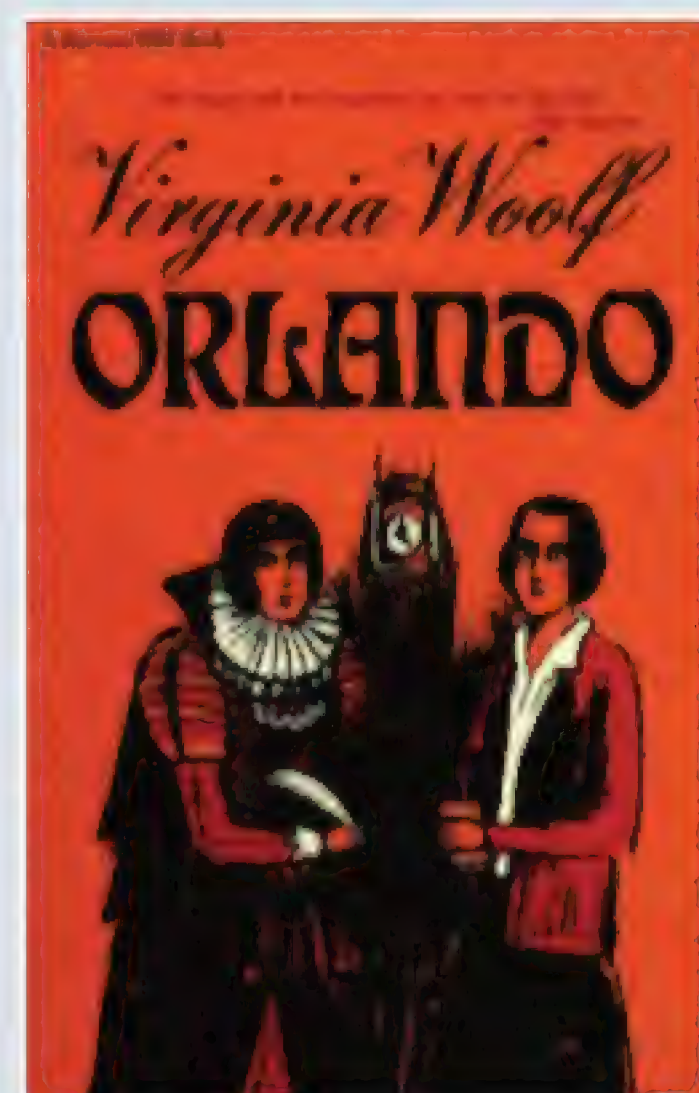
"I have never found anywhere, in the domain of art, that you don't have to walk to," she wrote a decade later in her essay collection *The Language Of The Night*. "It is a pretty wild country. There are, of course, roads. Great artists make the roads; good teachers and good companions can point them out. But there ain't no free rides, baby. No hitchhiking. And if you want to strike out in any new direction, you go alone. With a machete in your hand, and the fear of God in your heart." ✍

# Where Have I Seen This Before?

IN THE GENDER BLENDER

## THE HANDMAID'S TALE ▶

Margaret Atwood has never been particularly comfortable with her work being discussed as science fiction, and Le Guin has often spoke up in disapproval of her position. Le Guin has been a keen follower of Atwood, and regarded her work – most notably *The Handmaid's Tale* – as a brilliant expression of what a female author could bring to the genre. We tend to agree.

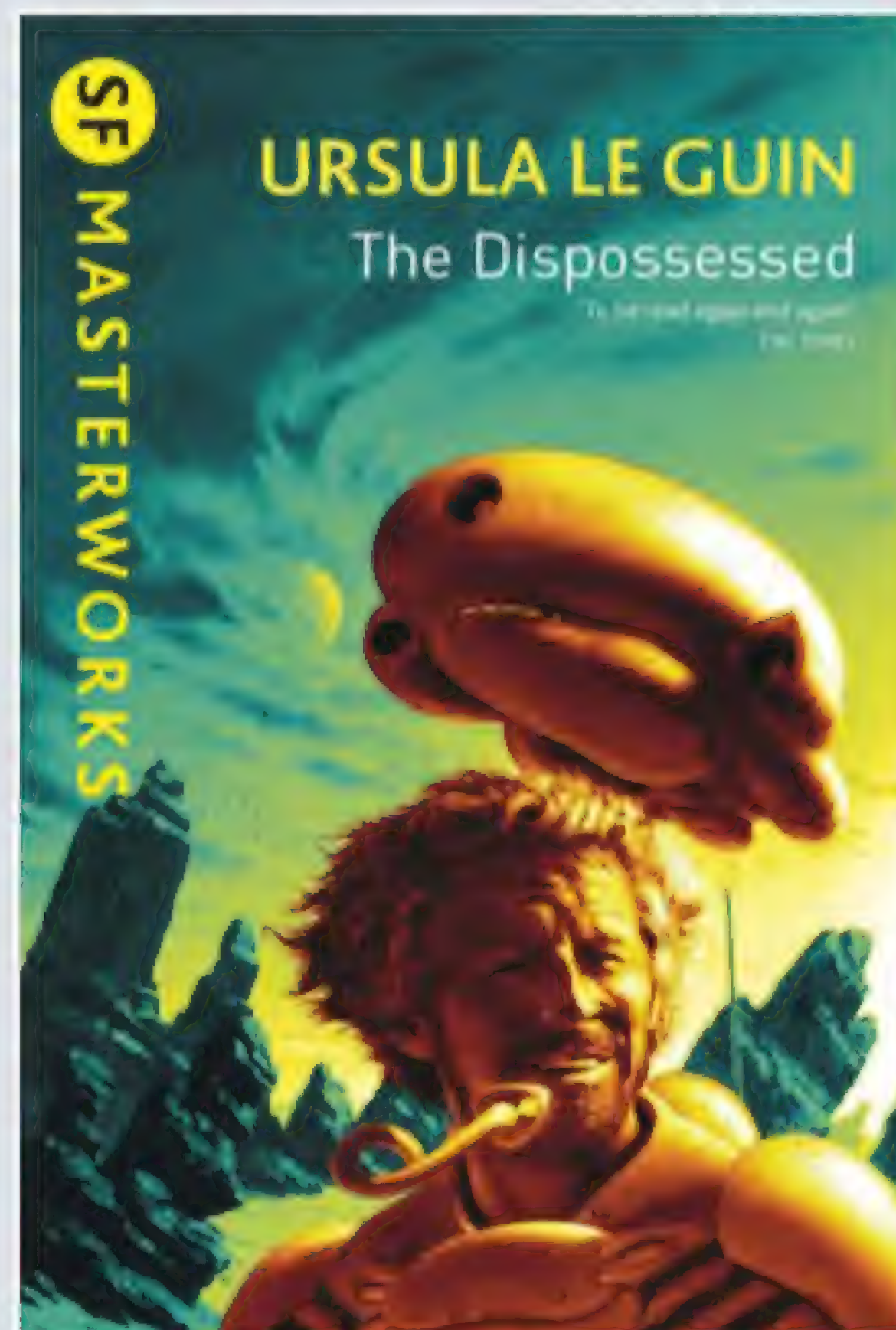
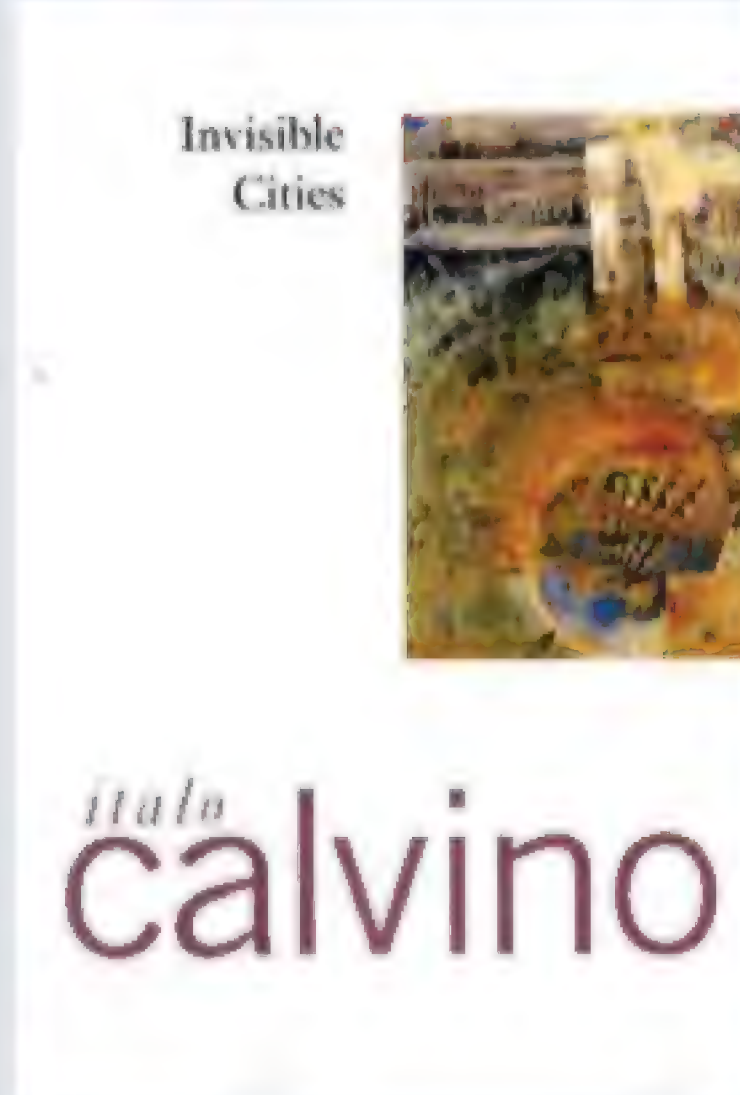


## ◀ ORLANDO: A BIOGRAPHY

*The Left Hand Of Darkness* is often raised in discussions about gender in literature, but rarely before Virginia Woolf's classic 1928 novel. Indeed, *Orlando* was a key text for Le Guin in forming the idea of shifting gender roles. "I saw the strangeness and brilliance of what she did there," she told *The Paris Review*. "So you could say that she gave me permission, the way a great writer does."

## INVISIBLE CITIES ▶

Many of Le Guin's key influences existed outside the walls of science fiction and fantasy. Sure, she got a little of her knack for world-building from Tolkien, but more came from post-modern writers like Italo Calvino, whose *Invisible Cities* is a masterclass in conjuring up landscapes and societies from a cluster of well-chosen words.



## THE DISPOSSESSED ▲

Le Guin's Hainish cycle of novels and stories take place in an alternate universe where societies evolved separately, separated by vast distances. It provided a lens through which any subject could be scrutinised: *The Left Hand Of Darkness* was just one manifestation of that concept; *The Dispossessed* is its politically astute half-brother.

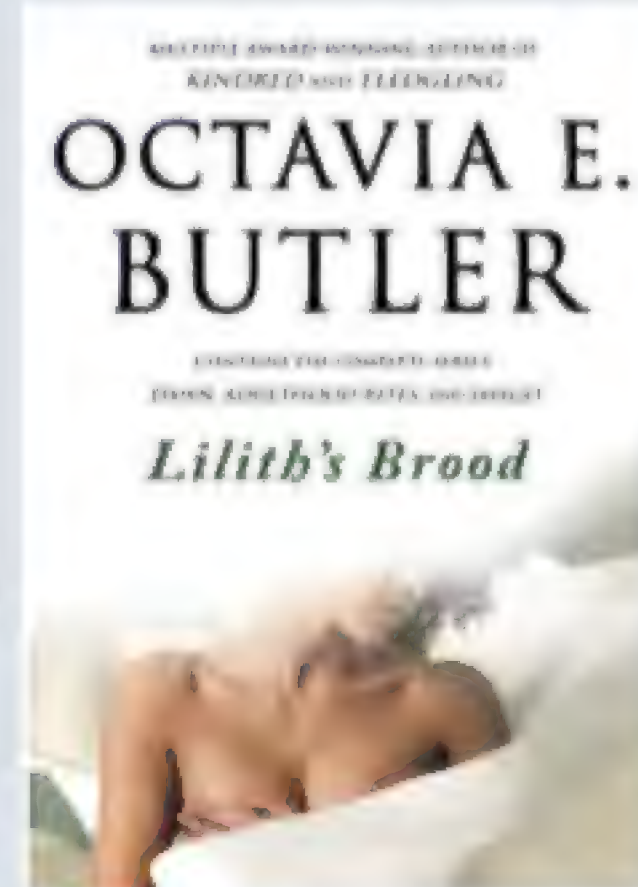


## ◀ THE FEMALE MAN

In the late Sixties, the world of science fiction was small and almost entirely male. After Le Guin, Joanna Russ was the most widely known female writer working in the genre. Her most famous work from that period is *The Female Man*, a cross-dimensional exploration of gender roles and womanhood that went on to become a key text in feminist literature.

## LILITH'S BROOD ▶

If Le Guin was regarded as an outsider on the basis of her gender, then Octavia E Butler had an even steeper path to climb. In the Eighties, science fiction was still a white man's world, and Butler's work challenged preconceived notions of both sexuality and race within the genre. She rarely hits a false note, her *Lilith's Brood* trilogy being a particular standout.







Which author would you like to see tackled next?

Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



# A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER

A pioneer who broke new ground in science fiction **WORDS KRYSTAL SIM**

**P**hilip José Farmer once said: "Imagination is like a muscle. I found out that the more I wrote, the bigger it got."

Indeed, Farmer flexed his writing muscles a great deal. A hugely prolific pulp fiction writer, his career spanned over 60 years. In that time he had over 100 short stories and novellas published, as well as over 50 novels.

His big break came in 1952, when his novella *The Lovers* became the first science fiction story to explicitly depict sex – with an alien life form, no less. Like a sci-fi Kinsey, he shone a light not just on the act, but also on sexuality itself, and did so at a time when this just wasn't on the agenda.

Born in Terre Haute, Indiana, Farmer was working in a steel mill when *The Lovers* made waves, but was able to quit and become a full-time writer. He is perhaps best known for the *World Of Tiers*

**"HIS CAREER SPANNED OVER 60 YEARS AND 50 NOVELS"**

series and the intriguing *Riverworld* novels, in which all humans from across time are reborn on an alien world.

He gained a reputation for pushing boundaries and taboos through his immensely readable and diverse body of work, and was

unafraid to tinker with his own and established literary characters like Tarzan, Doc Savage and even the inhabitants of Oz.

His career was prestigious too: he won a Hugo Award in 1953 for Most Promising Writer, and for novella *Riders Of The Purple Wage* in 1968 and *To Your Scattered Bodies Go* in 1972. In 2001 the Science Fiction Writers of America made him a SFWA Grand Master, and he won the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement.

Farmer passed away in 2009 at the age of 91. He left behind a great legacy of not always perfect, but challenging ideas. He was a pioneering writer who in many ways helped science fiction mature through a difficult adolescence.

## Words and wisdom

QUOTES FROM PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER NOVELS

**"AS SCIENCE PUSHES FORWARD, IGNORANCE AND SUPERSTITION GALLOP AROUND THE FLANKS AND BITE SCIENCE IN THE REAR"**

"THERE IS ANOTHER FEELING, ONE WHICH HE SHARES WITH MOST OF HUMANKIND. HE KNOWS HE'S SCREWED UP HIS LIFE, OR SOMETHING HAS TWISTED IT. EVERY THINKING MAN AND WOMAN KNOWS THIS. EVEN THE SMUG AND DIMWITTED REALISE THIS UNCONSCIOUSLY. BUT A BABY, THAT BEAUTIFUL BEING, THAT UNSMIRCHED BLANK TABLET, UNFORMED ANGEL, REPRESENTS A NEW HOPE. PERHAPS IT WON'T SCREW UP"

**"HE HAD DIED. NOW HE WAS ALIVE. HE HAD SCOFFED ALL HIS LIFE AT LIFE-AFTER-DEATH. FOR ONCE, HE COULD NOT DENY THAT HE HAD BEEN WRONG. BUT THERE WAS NO ONE TO SAY, 'I TOLD YOU SO'"**

"THE TRUTH IS THAT TROUT, LIKE VONNEGUT AND RAY BRADBURY AND MANY OTHERS, WRITES PARABLES. THESE ARE SET IN FRAMES WHICH HAVE BECOME CALLED, FOR NO GOOD REASON, SCIENCE FICTION. A BETTER GENERIC TERM WOULD BE 'FUTURE FAIRY TALES'. AND EVEN THIS IS OBJECTIONABLE, SINCE MANY SCIENCE FICTION STORIES TAKE PLACE IN THE PRESENT OR THE PAST, FAR AND NEAR"

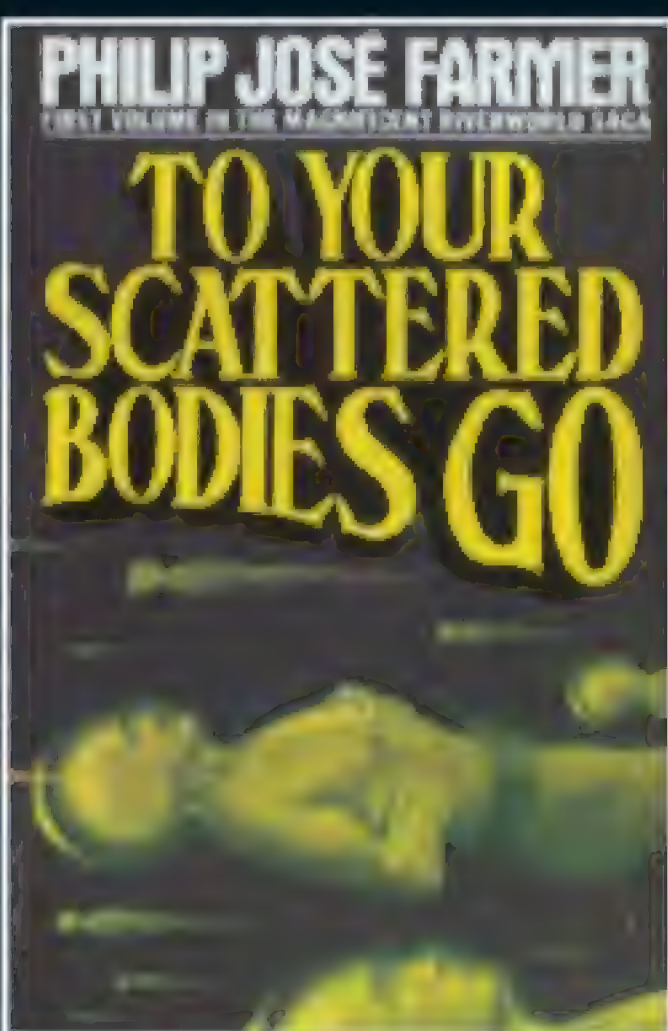




The macho pulp of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* – depicted here in the 1918 movie adaptation – was viciously satirised by Farmer.



19th Century explorer and adventurer Sir Richard Francis Burton – pictured here in a Persian disguise – was a key part of Farmer's *Riverworld* series.



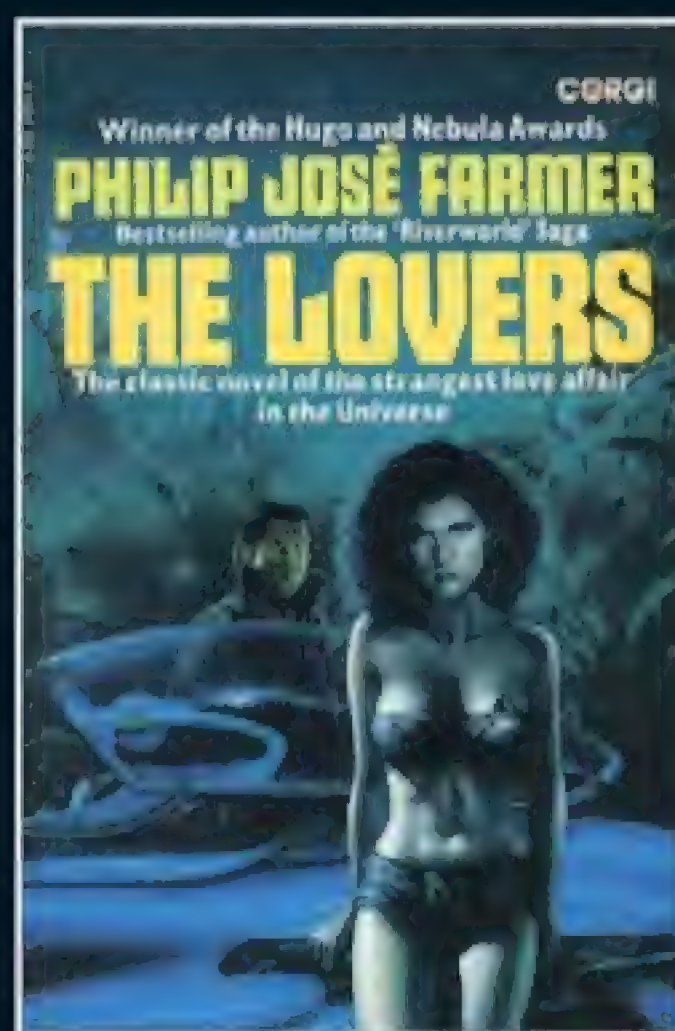
## Humanity reborn

Mass resurrection and adventure

**TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO**  
Publisher: SF Gateway  
Published: 1971  
Price: £18.99

What if every human who ever lived could be reborn on another planet? The first book in the *Riverworld* series follows adventurer and explorer Sir Richard Burton, who's resurrected by the banks of a mighty river. He meets other famous faces from history, like Hermann Göring and Alice Hargreaves – neé Liddell, the inspiration behind *Alice In Wonderland*. Farmer manages to make the idea of mass resurrection plausible, and explores the kinds of conflict that would occur.

["I loved the \*Riverworld\* series. It made me look up the works of Richard Burton – not the actor. #BookClub"](#)  
[@spconger](#)



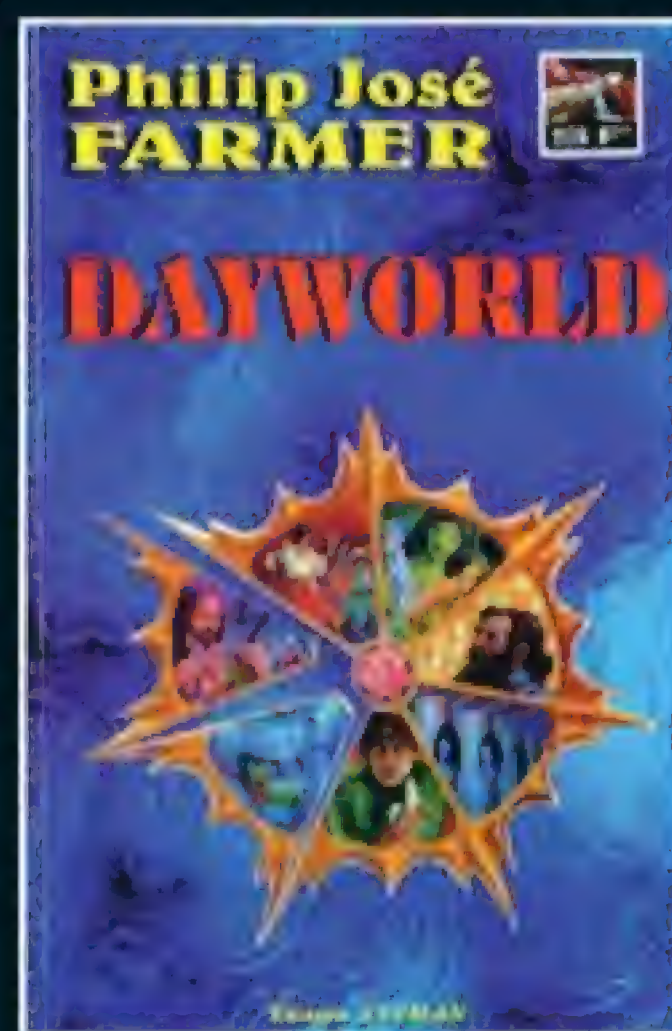
## Loving the alien

The novel which brought sex to sci-fi

**THE LOVERS**  
Publisher: SF Gateway  
Published: 1961  
Price: £2.99 (Kindle Edition)

Farmer was well-known for pushing the boundaries of sexuality, but it was *The Lovers* in which he first explored the taboo of human/alien sex, expanding on the story as a full novel almost a decade later. Protagonist Hal leaves the religious oppression of 35th Century Earth for an assignment to the planet Ozagen, where he falls for an alien fugitive called Jeanette. *The Lovers* explored a new frontier in science fiction, and it was the story that established Farmer as a science fiction writer.

["Loved \*The Lovers\*. Like Orwell in space. Atmospheric and character driven. Farmer's best. #BookClub"](#)  
[@THEBURNSUNIT999](#)



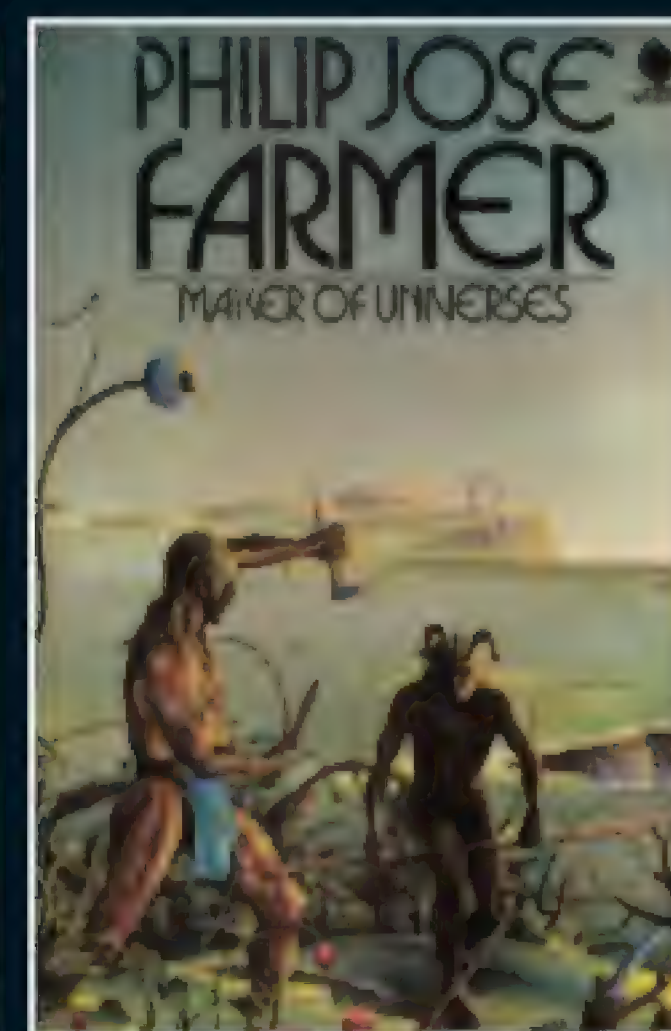
## Dystopian futures

Welcome to the world of tomorrow

**DAYWORLD**  
Publisher: Putnam Publishing Group  
Published: 1985  
Price: £4.95 (second hand listing)

Overpopulation in *Dayworld's* dystopian future sees humans put into suspended animation for six days a week. The story follows Jeff, a 'daybreaker' who rejects this idea, and is also a member of an anti-government group called the 'Immers'. To cover his tracks as a daybreaker, Jeff must effectively become seven different people, one for each day of the week, with different jobs, friends and family. A thoughtful 'what if' exercise that explores our fears about an expanding and claustrophobic population.

["On page 107 of \*Dayworld\*. It's never a good sign when you start skimming during the big, climactic fight scene... #BookClub"](#)  
[@ohhelloleah](#)



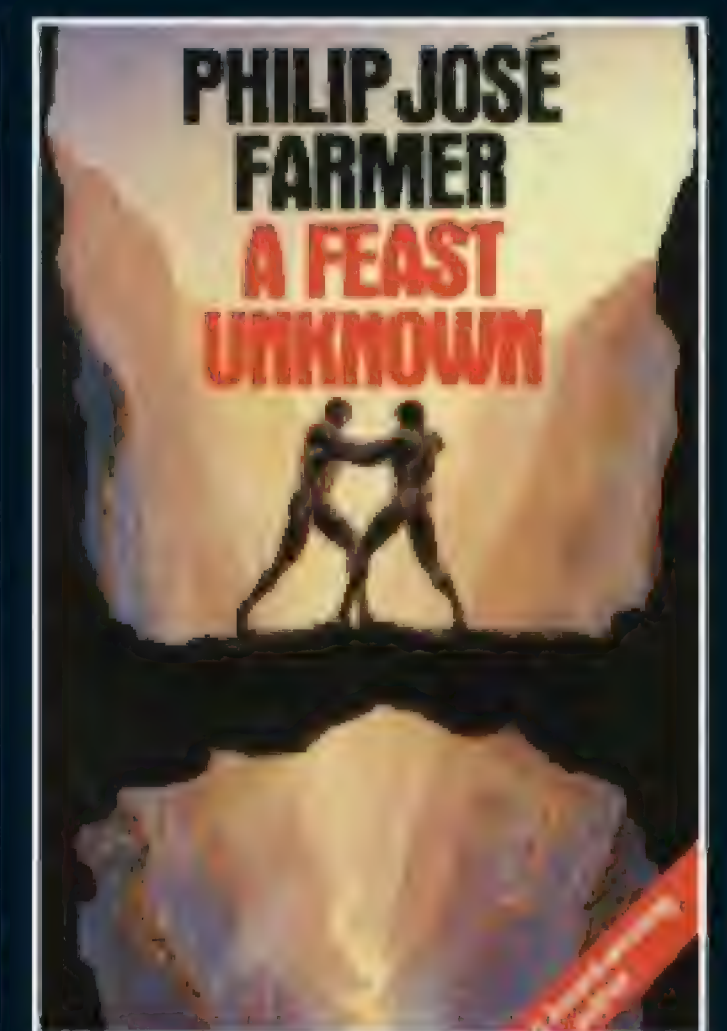
## Peeling the layers

Tiers of a retired linguist

**THE MAKER OF UNIVERSES**  
Publisher: SF Gateway  
Published: 1965  
Price: £2.48 (Kindle Edition)

Robert Wolff is disenchanted with his life. One day he discovers a horn that transports him to the World of Tiers, a planet made of layers ruled by its cruel creator, Lord Jadawin. The first region he encounters is a paradise, full of nymph-like humans from ancient Greece, one of who he falls in love with. When she's kidnapped, he has to navigate the other tiers to find her. It's an energetic satire of religious allegory – the further up the tiers Wolff goes, the closer he gets to enlightenment.

["The idea of Pocket universes has never been done so well, his later inclusion of Blake's visions was a nice touch. #BookClub"](#)  
[@mockery66](#)



## Sex and violence

All that's missing is rock and roll

**A FEAST UNKNOWN**  
Publisher: Titan  
Published: 1969  
Price: £7.99

Of course you want to read the diaries of Lord Grandrith, Lord of the Jungle – bastard son of Jack the Ripper. In this tale of overblown alpha-male sexuality and violence, Grandrith and Doc Caliban – thinly veiled guises for Tarzan and Doc Savage – are blessed with near-eternal life, but at the cost of their sexual potency, with neither being able to (ahem) stand to attention except during acts of violence. Ultimately, the two fight and... well, you can guess. At times grubby and graphic, it's not for everyone.

["This is a gruesome sex and violence version of pulp heroes like Tarzan and Doc Savage. #BookClub"](#)  
[@AcmeDarryl](#)

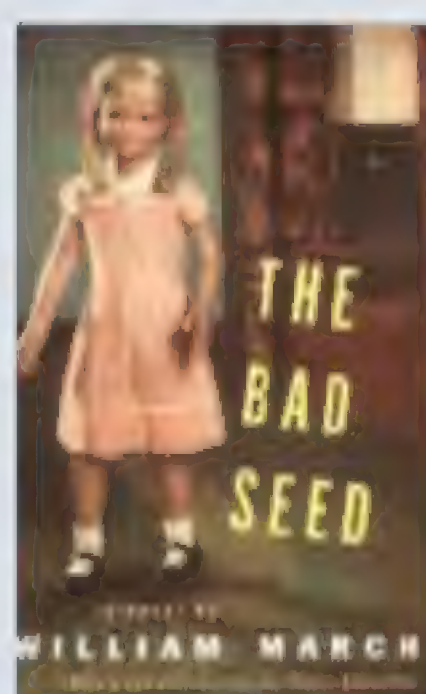


## Your Five Evil Children

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



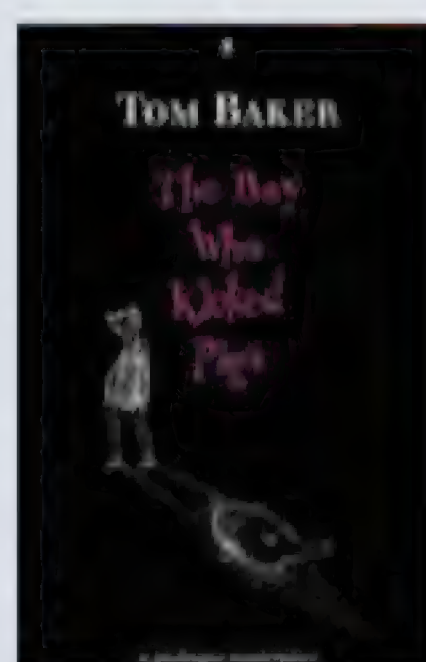
**1. Moondial**  
Helen Cresswell  
"Moondial, because it felt true to life, and made me realise Moffat's Weeping Angels idea ain't so original. #BookClub"  
@Tanlee DaBastard



**2. The Bad Seed**  
William March  
"The Bad Seed, a scary thriller about an eight-year-old serial killer. Chilling and macabre. #BookClub"  
@paul\_bowler



**3. Chocky**  
John Wyndham  
"John Wyndham's Chocky crept the hell out me. Was my friend's favourite book at school. #BookClub"  
@mockery66



**4. The Boy Who Kicked Pigs**  
Tom Baker  
"Easy! #BookClub The Boy Who Kicked Pigs. Why? I don't want to spoil it!"  
@cartoons byRic



**5. The Midwich Cuckoos**  
John Wyndham  
"Can't better The Midwich Cuckoos. It's a great book, one of Wyndham's best. #BookClub"  
@mozz71

Details Author: Sarah Lotz Publisher: Hodder Price: £18.99 Released: 22 May

# THE THREE

I want to believe

SCIFINOW  
Must read now!

The media's power to create panic, suspicion and fear is a well that is often returned to by authors telling stories of killer viruses, mind control and extraterrestrial plots. One of the things that makes Sarah Lotz's *The Three* so chilling is that the driving force behind the novel's conspiracy theories is simply human nature, with fear and greed meeting curiosity and madness with explosive consequences.

Opening with a horrifying account of a plane crash from the perspective of one of the passengers, *The Three* then broadens its scope as a 'non-fiction' book called *Black Thursday: From Crash To Conspiracy*, in which we learn that four planes went down on that day in different corners of the globe, and a single survivor was found in the wreckage of three of them. Three young children, practically unharmed, survived the nightmare and became famous overnight.

However, it's not long before the conspiracy theories begin. How did they survive? Was it an accident, an alien intervention, or a sign of the End Times? Are these kids in fact three of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, and if so where is the final child?

This is an ambitious novel, spanning multiple perspectives,

are attempting to care for them, and how that controversy is manufactured. What is more horrifying: the idea that these kids might not be of this world, or that there are people out there who want to gain power and money by convincing others that this is the case?

*The Three* combines genres as well as perspectives. As the alcoholic Paul

## "LOTZ KEEPS A FIRM GRIP ON THE MULTIPLE NARRATIVE THREADS"

forms and continents. From Japanese chatrooms to elderly New Yorkers, and the panicked delirium of a London luvvie to the disaffected confessions of a Southern prostitute, Lotz shows a tremendously impressive ability to deliver different voices, each as convincing as each other. We see how the controversy surrounding each of the children affects the people who

begins to suspect that his niece Jess might not be the same girl he knew, Lotz begins to incorporate a bit of John Wyndham (and a dash of Roman Polanski). Meanwhile, the evangelical Christians responsible for creating the idea that the Three are a sign of the apocalypse are written with a sharp satirical edge that only serves to emphasise how scarily plausible their actions are. Probably the closest point of comparison is Stephen King, with radical preacher Pastor Len's down-home friendliness masking a deeply un-Christian willingness to do whatever it takes to reach his goal.

By making *The Three* a collection of witness testimonies, Lotz is able to stretch out the tension for as long as possible, teasing possible answers with unreliable narrators who either have their own agendas or are simply losing their mind, making for a compelling and haunting mystery as future tragedy is hinted at. The biggest problem with the novel is that some of these stories don't have enough room to develop, with the sections set in South Africa feeling frustratingly light. However, Lotz keeps a firm grip on the multiple threads of her narrative and takes the reader to some chilling, unexpected places.

*The Three* is a gripping, deeply unsettling thriller that have you reading deep into the night and will stay with you long after the final page.

Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★★★



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**The Dead Zone**  
Stephen King  
Seeing the future is a curse for Johnny Smith in Stephen King's underrated classic.





**"CAN MAKE FOR QUITE A JARRING READING EXPERIENCE"**

**Details** Writer: Nnedi Okorafor Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton Price: £13.99 Released: 10 April

## LAGOON Aliens In Africa

Whether it's UFOs blowing up the White House or Bodysnatchers infiltrating Middle America, it seems like the USA always gets to make first contact where extra-terrestrials are concerned. Going against the grain, *Lagoon* sees Nigerian-American writer Nnedi Okorafor imagine what would happen if the aliens landed in Africa.

Three strangers: a marine biologist, a troubled soldier and a famous rapper, find themselves bound together when a spaceship of unknown origin crashes off the coast of the Nigerian capital, Lagos. The trio must race against time to deliver an alien ambassador to the President, all the while trying to evade corrupt officials out to intercept them and panicked citizens rioting in the streets.

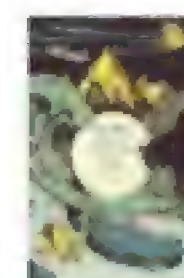
While this premise might have been enough for another writer, Okorafor, a World Fantasy Award winner, also infuses Nigerian myths and folklore into the plot. Alongside shape-shifting aliens and allusions to *Star Wars*, *ET* and *X-Men*, spider gods, psychic manatees, witches and man-eating motorways appear with little or no explanation.

If this mix of sci-fi and magical elements wasn't strange enough, the story is also told from multiple perspectives, some of which are only present for a chapter before never being heard from again. This can make for quite a jarring experience, and it becomes a hard read by around the half way point, as the novel inexplicably switches from a third to first-person narration, before finding its way back to the main plotline.

*Lagoon* is an ambitious novel that can be interpreted as a celebration of the ferocious life force of a city, a country or the wider human (and non-human) experience. However, it is also a disjointed tale, and with such a varied cast it is hard to really invest in the three main characters, who despite sharing love interests and internal conflict, ultimately never feel more than symbolic.

**Jack Parsons**

**VERDICT** ★★★



### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

**The Man With Compound Eyes**  
Wu Ming-Yi

Enjoy world fantasy? Try this Taiwanese tale of ecological disaster and magical spirits.

**Details** Author: Steve Feasey Publisher: Bloomsbury Price: £6.99 Released: 8 May

## MUTANT CITY

### Missing the magic

Judging by his work on *Mutant City*, penning a piece of young adult fiction that appeals outside the demographic is an art that author Steve Feasey just hasn't quite mastered yet.

There's an *X-Men* vibe to the narrative – a group of powerful teens called together to explore abilities to their full potential – but the flaw lies with the protagonists. Falling into a teen age bracket isn't a problem, but that they show it is. With jokes about nose picking and wind breaking cracked on too many occasions – ie, at all – it's an obvious reminder of who the book's aimed at.

Feasey's decision to opt for multiple character angles helps prose to flow, but causes problems with character building. At times, perspective choices are questionable, and he doesn't opt for the most likeable characters as leads. It's good for getting inside antagonists' heads, but makes connecting and caring about the handful worth rooting for difficult. For example, Jax, the head of the young mutants, has a mysterious side that'd benefit from POV

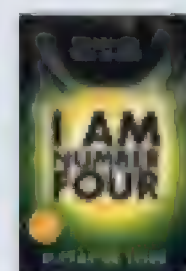
chapters, and Anya, who shows signs of an interesting outlook, is explored least of all.

*Mutant City* has potential, but isn't executed as well as it could be. Future technology, like palm-embedded phones, is glossed over and not explored enough. Although it comes with its fair share of action, it is best described as intriguing rather than gripping. The overarching story progresses at too steady a pace, so it feels like an extended introduction as opposed to a standalone story.

Things pick up towards the end, with a relationship reveal, an unexpected murder and the 'rebirth' reminiscent of *Resident Evil*'s Nemesis program, but it relies on you wanting to progress to part two, which isn't something we can guarantee.

**Rowena Heal**

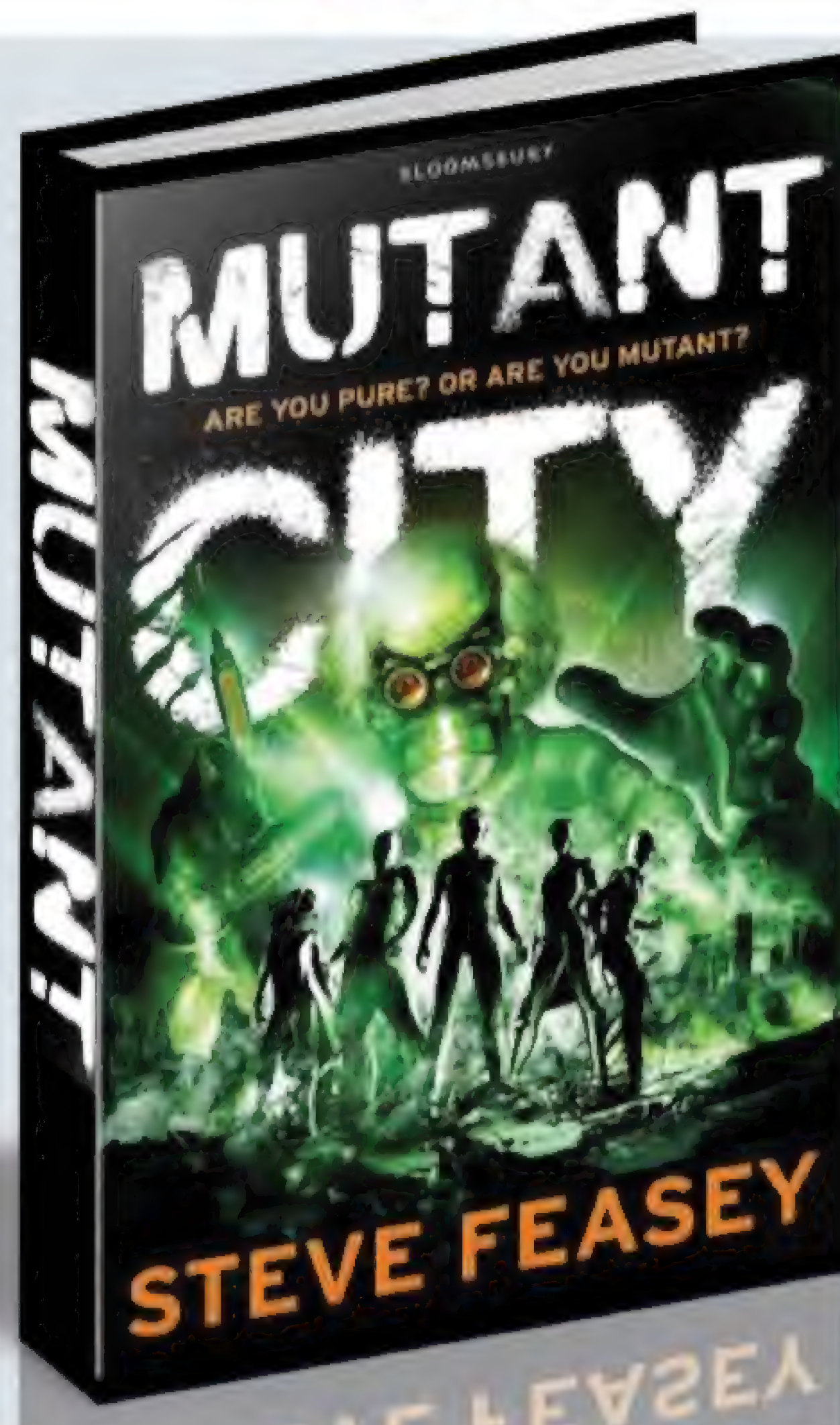
**VERDICT** ★★★



### IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

**I Am Number Four**  
Pittacus Lore

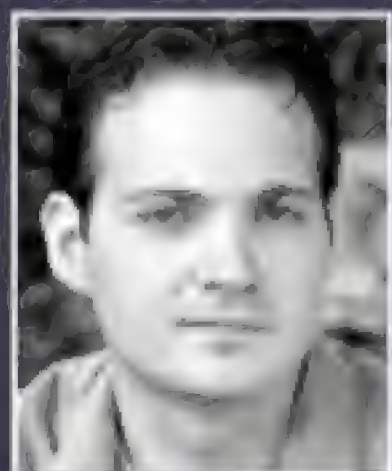
John is one of nine far-from-average teens on the run as he is hunted – to be killed – for his powers.





60 SECONDS WITH

## Brandon Sanderson



**Where does *Words Of Radiance* pick up after *The Way Of Kings*?**  
*Words Of Radiance* starts right after the end of *The Way Of Kings*. I intend the *Stormlight Archive* books to basically follow right after each other,

except for the big break between books five and six.

**Which character in *The Stormlight Archive* were you most excited to return to?**

Well, this book is Shallan's book, but I was excited to get back to all of them. I've said before that in many ways Dalinar is my favourite, simply because he is the character who I have been planning the longest, and the very first story that I ever wrote as a teenager was about Dalinar. But this is Shallan's book, and Shallan had to take a very secondary role in the first book. So I was really excited to get back to this and be able to show off Shallan in the same way that the first book really showed off Kaladin.

**"YOUR UNIVERSE IS ONLY AS INTERESTING AS THE PEOPLE IN IT"**

**What is the most vital thing to remember when creating a fantasy universe?**

Your universe is only as interesting as the people in it, and your magic is only as cool as the people who are using it. World-building is important; it's awesome, and it's why I write fantasy. But at the end of the day, if you don't have a great set of characters, you're going to fail, so don't let your world-building overshadow character is the thing I recommend to keep in mind.

**What is the biggest challenge of tackling a fantasy saga this enormous in scale?**

The biggest challenge is keeping everything focused and the narrative tight. This is the reason that I started doing the Interludes, which are short stories and novelettes set in-world that are sprinkled through the book. The idea is that those are pressure valves for me to spend time world-building and talking about different characters so I can keep the rest of

the narrative more tightly focused on the story I want to tell. I think the challenge is not letting the story get away from you.

*Words Of Radiance* by Brandon Sanderson is available now from Orion.

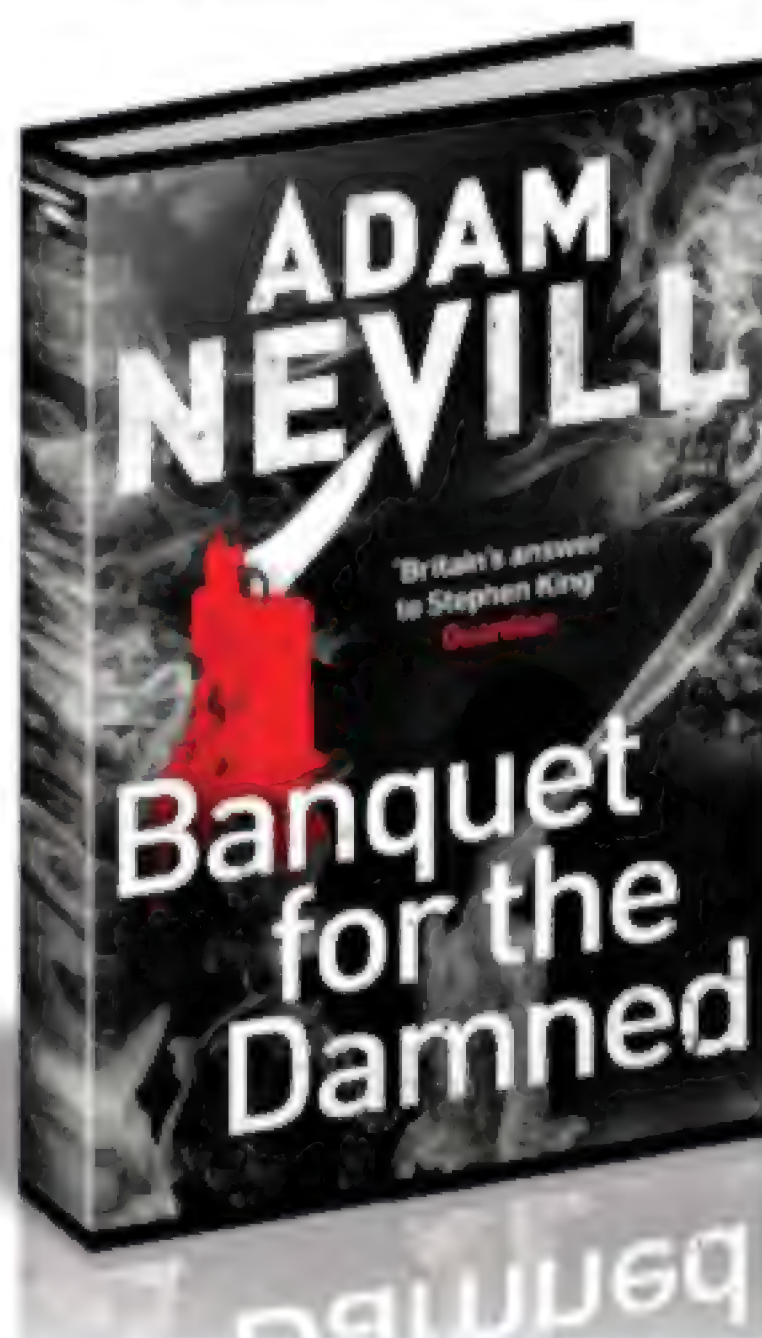


**Details** Author: Adam Nevill Publisher: Pan Price: £7.99 Released: Out now

# BANQUET FOR THE DAMNED

**A feast for the soul**

**If you're a** fan of macabre ghost stories then you're going to love this ghoulish tale. Flailing musicians Dante and Tom head to St Andrews for the chance to work with reclusive academic Elliot Coldwell,



writer of Dante's favourite book, the eponymous *Banquet*.

With their band in tatters, Dante jumps at the chance to become Coldwell's research assistant and make his long-dreamt concept album based on the book. Tom tags along, but all is not what it seems in the Scottish university town.

Students are coming to bloody ends. A scholar of the occult, the finger of suspicion is pointed at Coldwell as it emerges that it is his acolytes that are afflicted. When Coldwell pushes Dante into the path of his enigmatic assistant Beth, he begins to have bad dreams too.

His language accumulates dread until you begin to feel as these poor, terrorised students do: frozen in fear. The sequences involving this supernatural creature lurking in the shadows are vivid, heightening your senses and spurring you to read on.

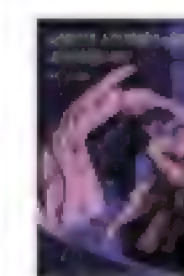
That said, Elliot is a bit of an Aleister Crowley cliché – an old academic moaning about people not appreciating the unseen world. Also, Beth remains a puzzle and doesn't capture the imagination.

Perhaps where *Banquet For The Damned* falls down is in the somewhat stiff dialogue. However, Nevill nails the location, describing St Andrews with a mixture of grandeur and foreboding.

If you're in the mood for some modern supernatural horror then you'll find this a treat. won't keep you guessing, but will certainly keep you turning the page.

Claire Nicholls

**VERDICT** ★★☆☆



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**Ghost Stories Of An Antiquary**  
MR James  
Don't let the sleepy rural backdrops fool you, there's supernatural devilry around.

**Details** Author: Kenneth Calhoun Publisher: Hogarth Price: £12.99 Released: Out now

# BLACK MOON

**Wake me up**

**It's a sad** twist that Kenneth Calhoun's frustratingly promising debut novel is about a world that cannot sleep when the book leaves the reader feeling in need of a snooze.

A handful of 'sleepers' find themselves the envy of an exhausted and increasingly unstable society that has succumbed to an unexplained insomnia epidemic. It is no longer safe to doze off; those caught napping risk getting murdered by the violent and irrational sleep-deprived infected. Biggs and Lila still have the gift of sleep, allowing them to maintain the ability to process thoughts, rationalise and remember who and what they have lost.

Calhoun demonstrates the cheerful effects of insomnia on the mind and body with

terrifying plausibility – anyone who has ever experienced night shifts will empathise with the jumbled syntax, shuffling movements and red eyes.

Each chapter sees the perspective switch, which preserves interest to a certain degree. However, the inclusion of several additional characters, greedily expecting their own chapters, creates so much distance that the narrative becomes as random and incoherent as the insomniacs.

*Black Moon* blunders on, blurring the lines between dreams, reality and hallucinations, often picking up after the event and expecting the reader to catch up. Perhaps this ambiguity is cleverly contrived, along with the arduous pacing and endlessly long chapters. If his intention is



to invoke confusion and despair then job well done.

Despite a solid foundation, the construction fails to hold this zombie-esque waking (not walking) dead chiller together for long enough to fulfil its potential.

Claire Nicholls

**VERDICT** ★★☆☆



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**Nod**  
Adrian Barnes  
The world suffers a sleepless night, with the few who manage sharing the same dream.

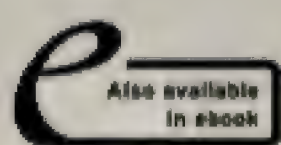


# ANGELS. DEVILS. DEMONS.

HE WILL UNLEASH HELL ON EARTH  
TO KEEP HIS THRONE.



THE STORY OF THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR  
AS YOU'VE NEVER READ IT BEFORE.



[www.gollancz.co.uk](http://www.gollancz.co.uk)



**Details** Author: Debbie Johnson Publisher: Del Rey Price: £8.99 Released: Out now

# DARK VISION

**Fifty shades of supernatural**

**Sci-Fi Now**  
Must read now!

**There's not exactly** a shortage of female-driven fantasy fiction to be found on the book shelves at present, so much of it featuring such remarkably similar elements that there must be a checklist for the author, and Debbie Johnson's debut novel is textbook in this regard. Orphaned young female? Check. Difficult upbringing? Check. Strange supernatural abilities? Check. Handsome stranger with answers? Check. Decision to make that will save the world? Check.

Lily McClain has no idea that she is a Celtic goddess. For 20 odd years she has led a solitary life, the only hint that she may be a little different being the visions she encounters at the mere touch of the flesh of another. Understandably, she does not take the news of her divinity well, and is horrified even further to learn that the fate of humanity is at her mercy. Oh, and that she is expected to become the mate of High King Gabriel, the fact that he is magnificently handsome, toned and best mates with vampires doing little to soften the blow. To add insult to injury, there is also a bunch of baddies who want Lily on their side, and engage in all sorts of magical

skulduggery in an attempt to convince her to choose them.

It's all there with bells on – very *Mortal Instruments*, very *Secret Circle*, and probably destined to be acquired by Sky Living for a few seasons of easy viewing. Yet, there is a little something extra to be found in *Dark Vision*. Johnson has shrewdly cottoned on to the success of the *Fifty Shades* trilogy with her virginal, naive heroine and dominant, smouldering hero. Furthermore, she also has the insight to blend in the right amount of otherworldly action, humour, Irish folklore and the magnificent setting of Liverpool.

While events are a little predictable and Lily's stompie strops all too frequent and unnecessary, *Dark Vision* is an effortless read; chick lit with a paranormal kick.

**Claire Nicholls**

**VERDICT** ★★★★★



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**Faelorehn**

**Jenna Elizabeth Johnson**

Outsider Meghan meets a handsome stranger who introduces her to a world of Celtic myth and magic.



**Details** Author: Mur Lafferty Publisher: Orbit Price: £8.99 Released: Out now

# GHOST TRAIN TO NEW ORLEANS

**First class fantasy**

**When we stumbled** on *The Shambler's Guide To New York City*, we were all set to pack our bags and move into Mur Lafferty's universe permanently.

Like a cross between Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* and *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, it followed the hugely likeable heroine Zoe as she takes up a job as a travel book editor, only to discover that her boss is a vampire and her colleagues comprise of zombies, a water sprite, a death goddess and an insatiable incubus called John. Sadly, the latter is missing from the sequel, but that's not all the story was lacking.

After an eventful ride on the ghost train, Zoe and her team pitch up in New Orleans and the action slows to a chugging pace. While the author continues her already



impressive world building, the characters fail to develop.

This is still better than most urban fantasies; it's just that the first instalment raised the bar to a height this struggles to live up to.

**Jodie Tyley**

**VERDICT** ★★★★★

**Details** Author: Michael J Ward Publisher: Gollancz Price: £16.99 Released: Out now

# THE EYE OF WINTER'S FURY: DESTINY QUEST BOOK 3

**Game on**

**We return to Valeron** for a darker and more adult adventure. The story takes place after the events of *The Heart Of Fire*, but it can be played separately for those joining the game late. Set in the brutal world of Valeron, you are Prince Arran – the second heir to the throne who must step up and lose his sickly boy image if he's to become a hero of legend.

With each instalment, Ward has given gamers more control over the choices they make so that by the end, you'll feel as though you've been on a journey – if you make it. There's a new death penalty system that means players must record each defeat, which leads to penalties. It's a punishing new rule, but there are also chances to regain full health by finding the items you need.



The author draws on a lifetime of gaming, and it shows with his cast of engaging characters and plots that are masterfully woven.

**Mel Goodyear**

**VERDICT** ★★★★★



MANKIND'S FIRST STEPS INTO A HOSTILE '4X' UNIVERSE

# HORIZON

"I had way more fun playing Horizon than I have any other 4x strategy game."

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# In The Year 2064

11 OF SCI-FI'S FINEST WELCOME YOU TO THE  
WORLD'S FAIR...50 YEARS FROM NOW

WORDS  
JONATHAN HATFULL

50 ago, the visionary author Isaac Asimov wrote a piece for the *New York Times* pondering what the World's Fair would look like in 2014. He predicted a theme of "peace through understanding," with technologically advanced kitchens and underwhelming robots. Now, SciFiNow asks some of our finest sci-fi writers to peer 50 years into the future and give their best shot at describing how we'll be living and the latest innovations we'll be marvelling at...





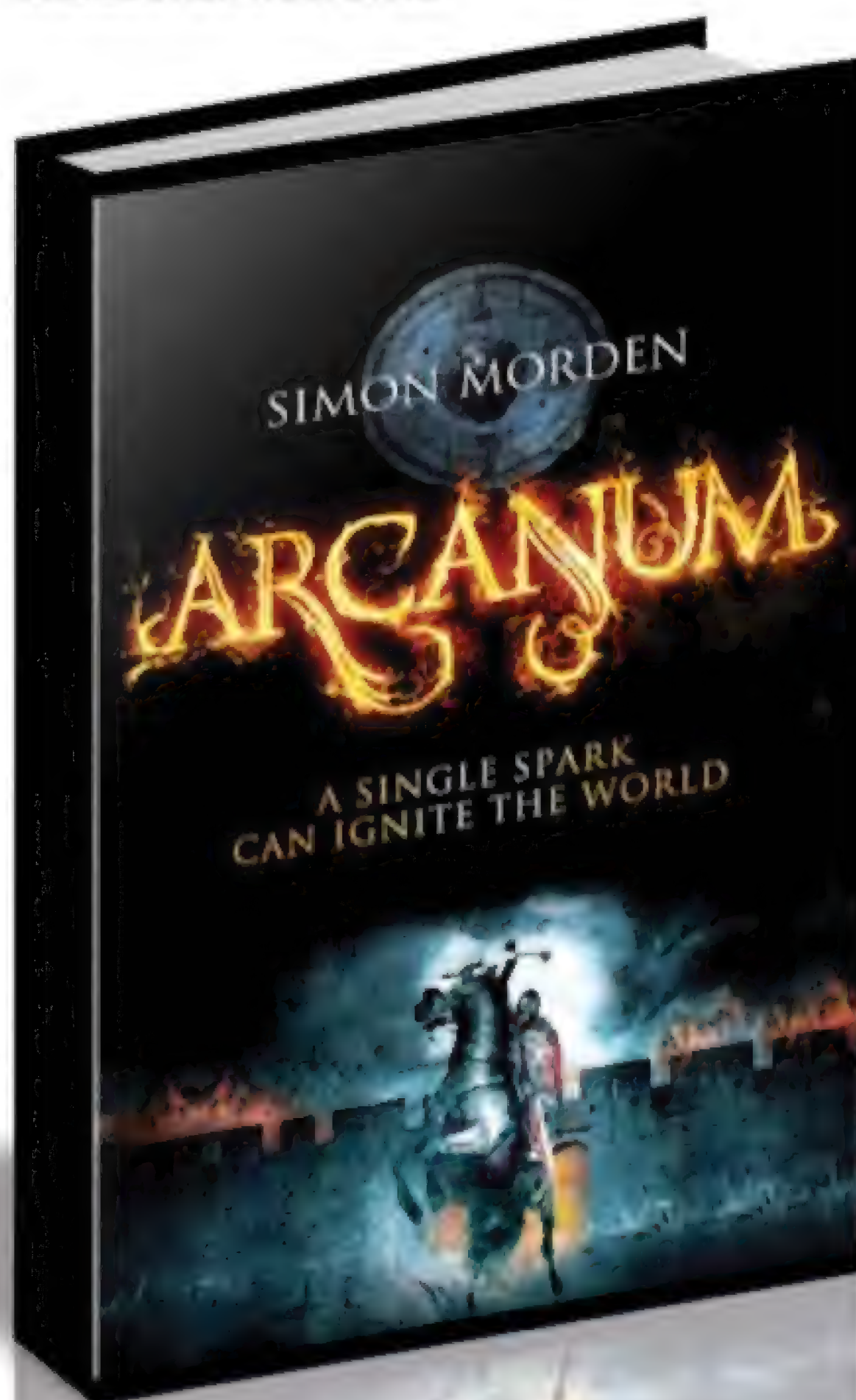
## THERE WILL BE... NO MURDEROUS CATS

"Disembowelled birds in your living room? Dead mice on your doormat?

Wildlife predation by domestic cats is consigned to the history books with our new Pacificat implant, featuring the latest in neural programming! Once installed, Pacificat will subtly alter the cat's natural hunting instincts. While still regarding small furry animals and garden birds as endlessly fascinating, the urge to chase, catch, endlessly torment and eventually kill is gone. Pacificat is engineered for the home market using proven technology from the highly successful Department of Corrections' prisoner pacification scheme, bringing peace to America's maximum security penitentiaries – and beyond – for over a decade.

"Pacificat has a failure rate of less than 0.1 per cent, and is compliant with the Federal Domestic Animals Act of 2053, meaning no more indoor cats! Let your moggy roam free, safe in the knowledge that Tibbles isn't contributing to the annihilation of native wildlife."

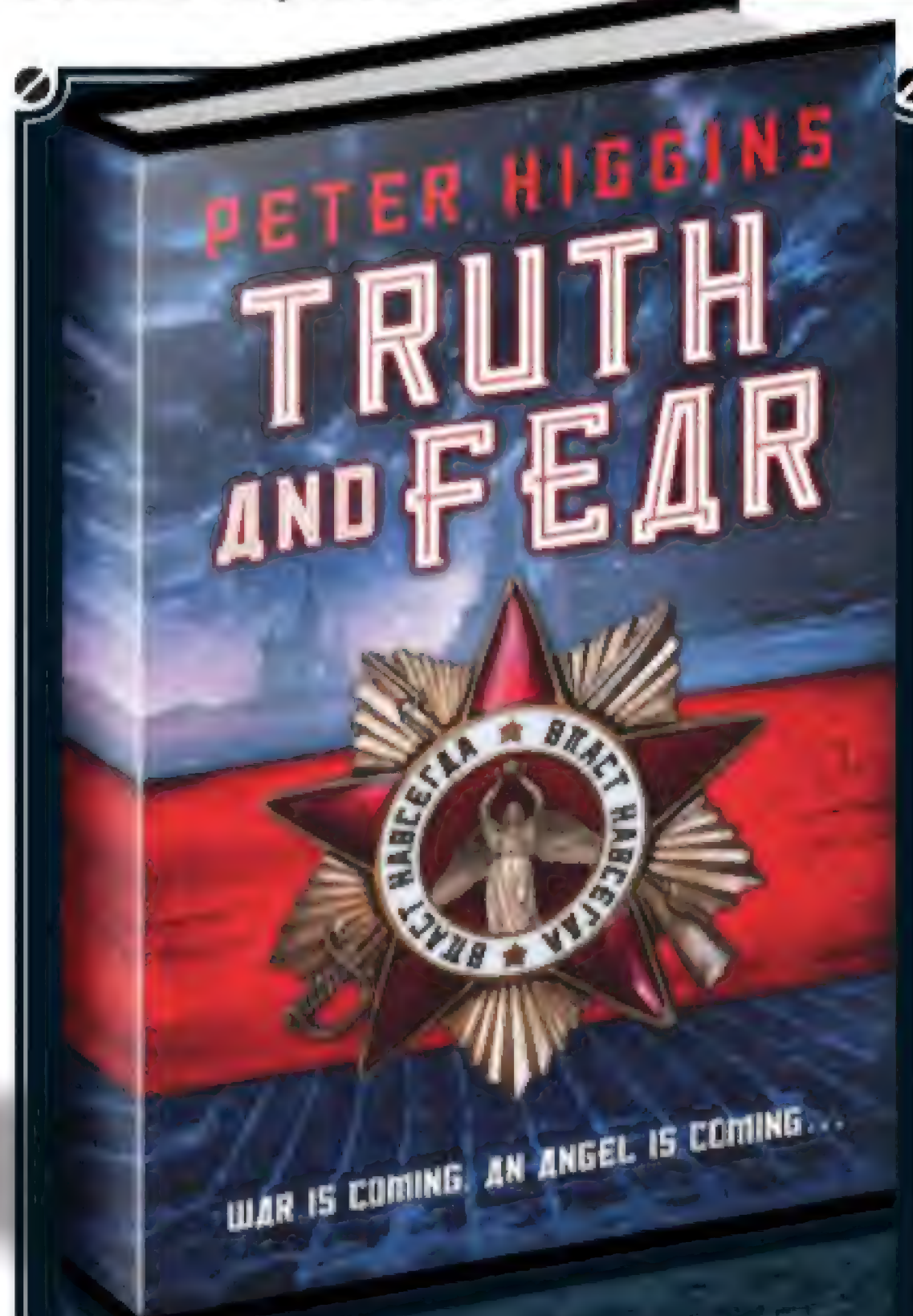
**Simon Morden is the author of *Arcanum*, available now from Orbit.**



"DEAD MICE ON YOUR DOORMAT? PACIFICAT WILL SUBTLY ALTER THE CAT'S NATURAL HUNTING INSTINCTS"



Asimov's view of the future was slightly off; will ours be any more accurate?



## THERE WILL BE... FAMILIAR FACES

"King Charles III of Remaining England will visit the 2064 World Fair as part of his 116th birthday celebrations,

accompanied by his heir Prince William, who's 82. The rest of the family will tag along: Prince George (aged 51), George's first child (29) and his first grandchild (six). That's five royal generations together, but it's unlikely England will ever see a monarch under 80 again.

"The royal family's a demographic microcosm. In 2064 there'll be more than half a million people aged over 100 in Britain alone. You won't need to take my word for it: most readers of Isaac Asimov's 1964 article couldn't hope to live to see if his predictions came true, but most people reading this will be able to visit the 2064 World Fair themselves. You'll see familiar faces if you go."

**Peter Higgins is the author of *Truth And Fear*, published in March by Gollancz.**



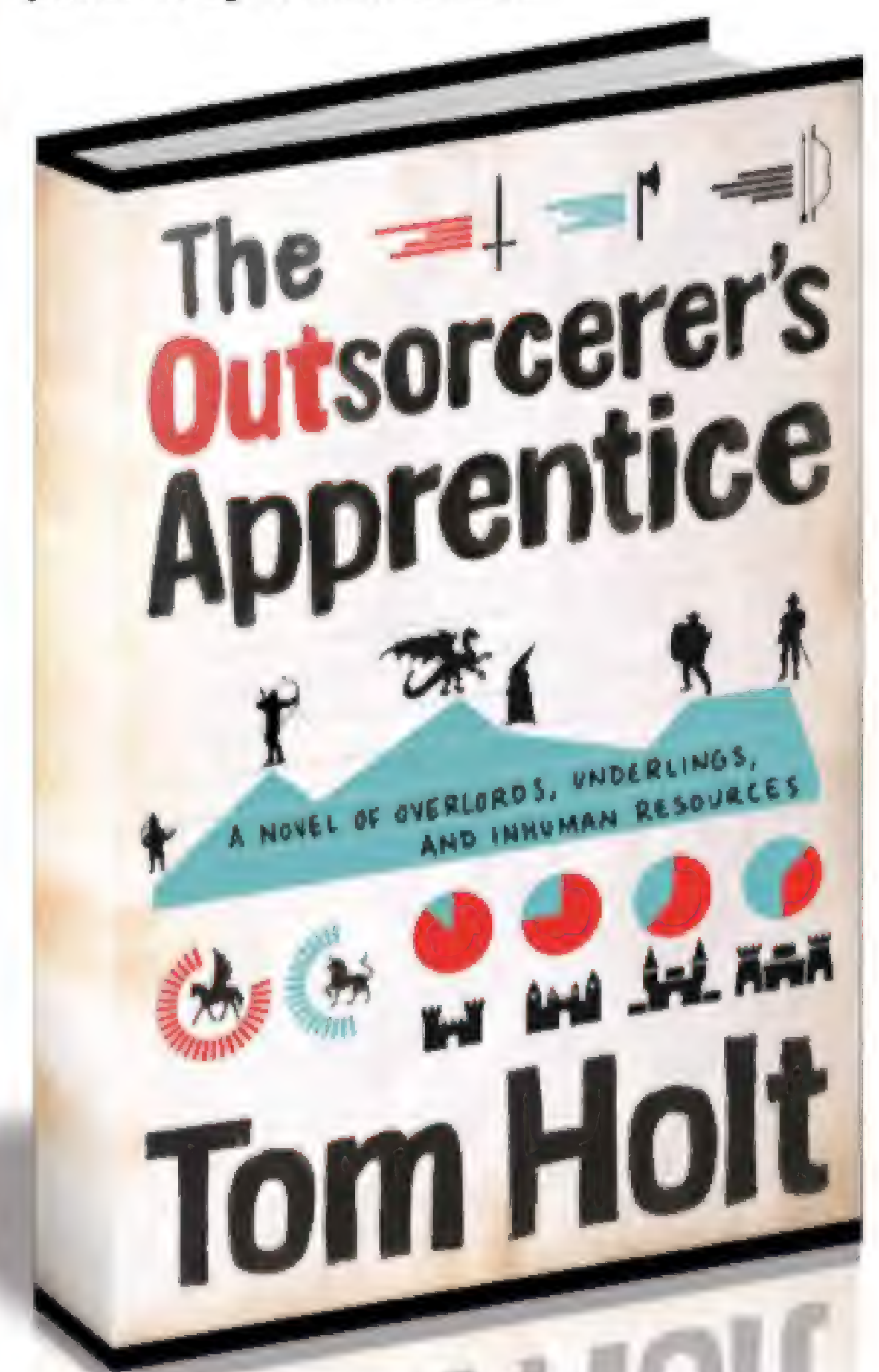
## THERE WILL BE... VIRTUAL BURGERS

"One thing you can be guaranteed to find at the World's Fair in 50 years time will be hamburger stalls.

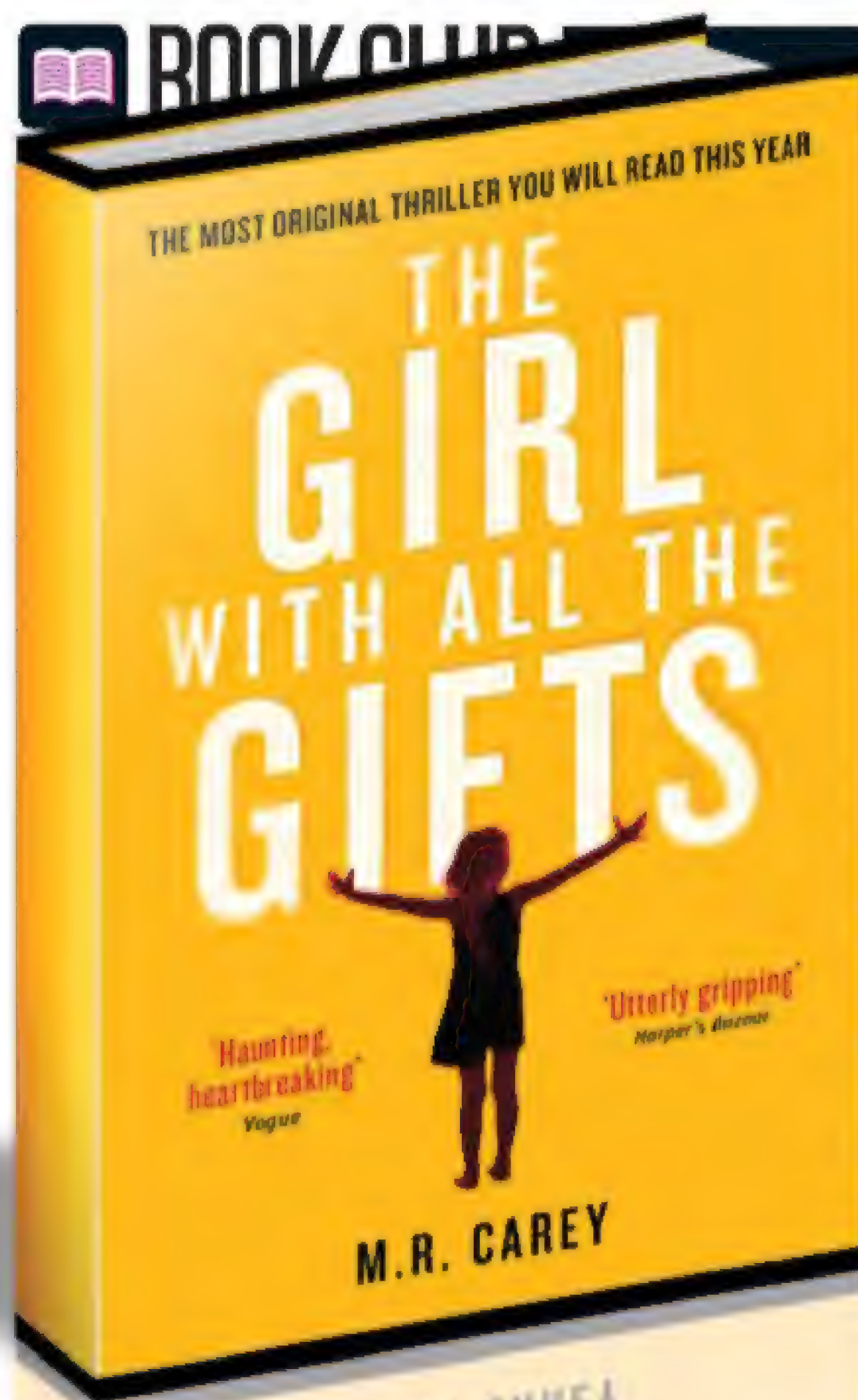
"What form they will take, however, is another matter entirely. If the Fair is a purely virtual event, the stalls and the burgers they sell will be made up out of ones and zeroes rather than prime beef.

"If they've cracked teleportation by then, I imagine the whole thing will be beamed direct into your pancreas, complete with onions, dill pickle and a specially developed synthetic enzyme to help simulate flatulence and gastric reflux. If not, I'm assuming the virtual burger stall will send information to our cranial implants to give us an overwhelming impression of having just eaten a scrumptious, flame-grilled chunk of cow. The experience will have no nutritional value whatsoever, but some things never change."

**Tom Holt's *The Outsorcerer's Apprentice* will be published by Orbit on 15 June.**







### THERE WILL BE... DRY LAND FOR THE WEALTHY

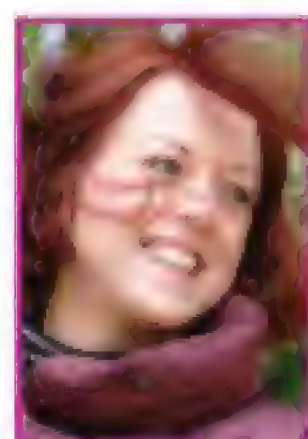
"In the World's Fair of 2064, there will be a huge emphasis on managing the environment. Zero-carbon houses and appliances will be on display, the majority using hydrogen cells with third- and fourth-generation proton-exchange membranes.

"Managing extreme weather conditions will be a big issue too. Weather patterns in 2064 will be broadly controllable by creating sustained, powerful bursts of electromagnetic force to manipulate 'plumes' of atmospheric particles. This technology, derived from the current HAARP project, will allow meteorologists to deflect hurricanes hundreds of miles at the flick of a switch, control wind speed across vast areas and precipitate or suppress rainfall.

"But with habitable land mass shrinking and the knock-on impact on farming and grazing land, one of the most talked-about exhibitions will be the protein gardens, where meat is grown in-vitro from the muscle cells of animals. Another will be the modular housing units being designed for the first bubble cities scheduled to be launched around 2070. Drawing all of their energy from wave power, these floating conurbations will house a third of Earth's human population; the poorest third. The people who have to kiss dry land goodbye will be the jobless, hopeless, demonised poor."

**MR Carey is the author of *The Girl With All The Gifts*, released in paperback from Orbit 7 July.**

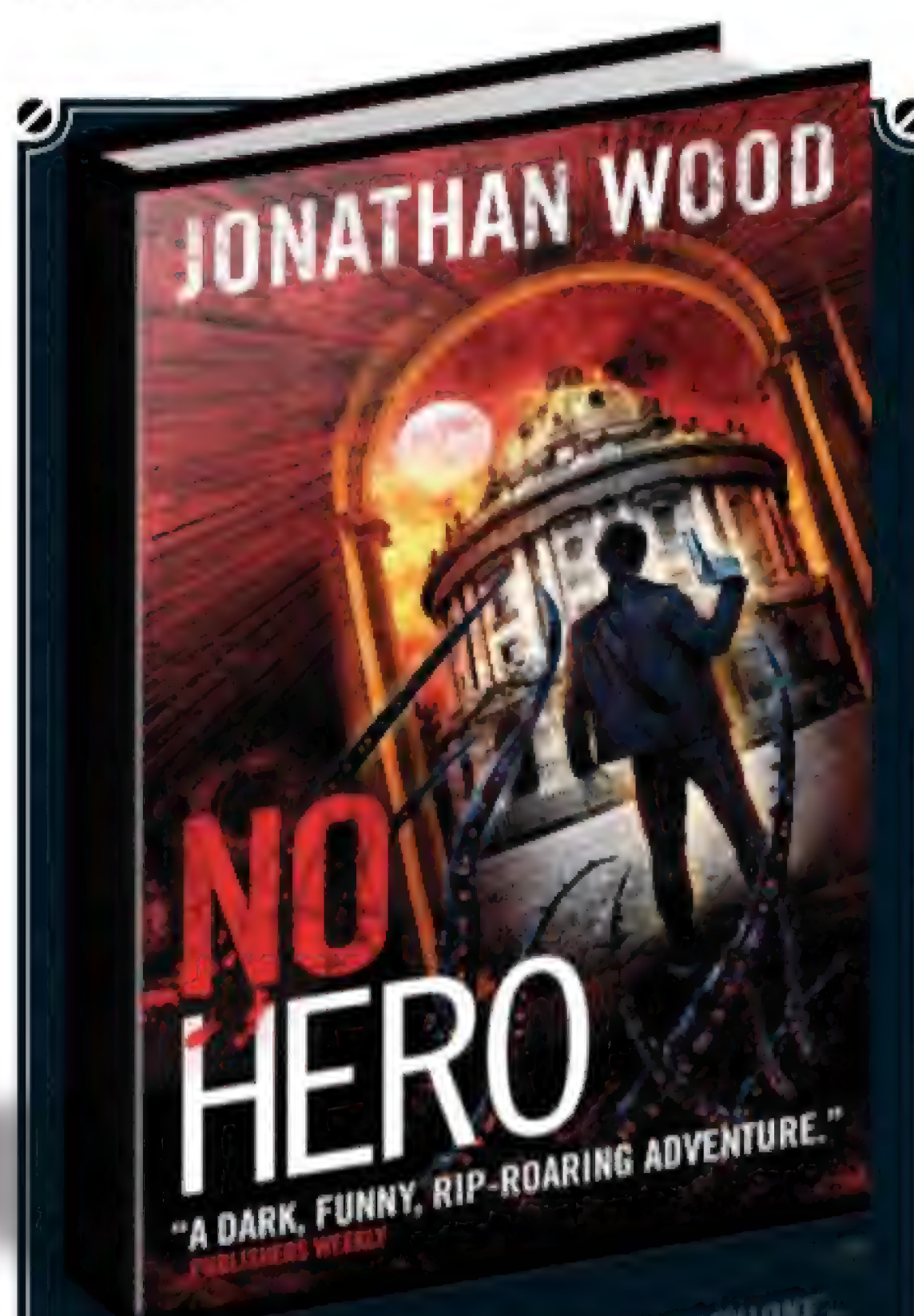
**"THE FIRST BUBBLE CITIES WILL HOUSE A THIRD OF EARTH'S HUMAN POPULATION"**



### THERE WILL BE... NO FLYING CARS

"It's hard to believe that once the Fair might have fitted within a park or a set of temporary structures. The 2064 Fair requires the conversion of an entire city – New York might do. Attendees can be spotted by their Fair monocles, which feed the details of each exhibit to the person's lens. Portable tech has become wearable tech has become embeddable tech, while hologram assistants are all the rage now that they've expanded the selection of avatars! They still don't have flying cars, though; the air-space permits were a nightmare."

**VE Schwab is the author of *Vicious*, available now from Titan.**

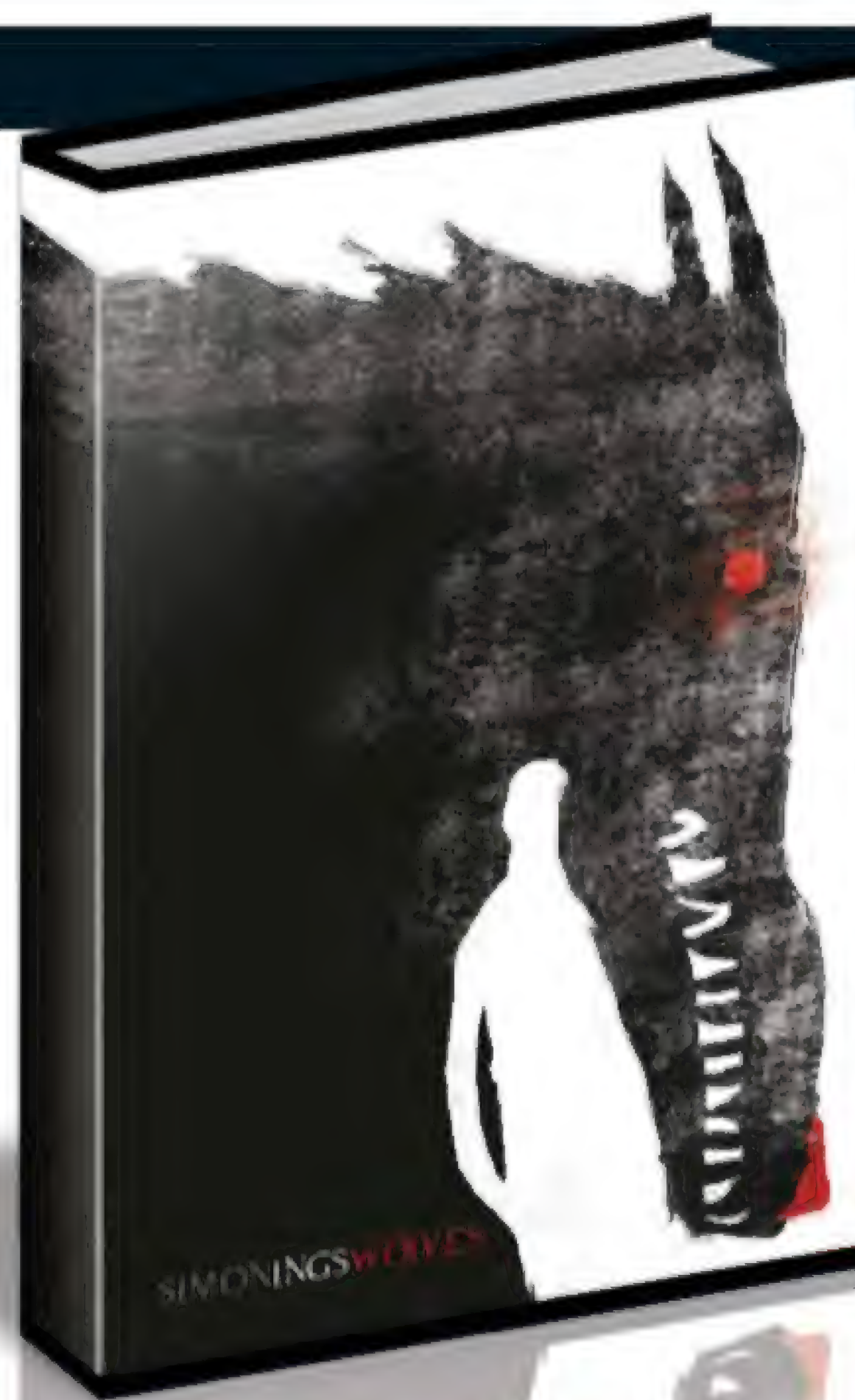


### THERE WILL BE... ROBOT/CHIMP ARMIES

"I'm almost certain that we're meant to have uploaded our consciousnesses to the internet by then. I'm not sure who's meant to maintain our server farms – probably chimps. But they'll have gotten smart enough to rise up against us, so we'll have created a robot army to fight them. But robot armies turn on you too, so I imagine that by 2064 the robots and the chimps will have joined forces against humanity, so we could be in a pretty bad way.

"That said, whenever we're on the brink of species-death we get either some kids, a very old person or Keanu Reeves and trick them into performing mass genocide on our enemies. Unfortunately, that's bound to have left Earth a desiccated husk, so then we'll need to abandon it and flee to the stars. That gives us about 50 years to get the life-ships prepped."

**Jonathan Wood's *No Hero* is available now from Titan.**



### THERE WILL BE... QUORN PROTESTS

"Organisers of the 2064 Worlds' Fair – the first where the apostrophe appears to the right of the 's' – expected the location to dominate headlines. Never mind that the Fair itself occupied little more than the living quarters of China's first base in the Mare; curating an expo on the surface of another planetary body was surely deserving of the world's attention.

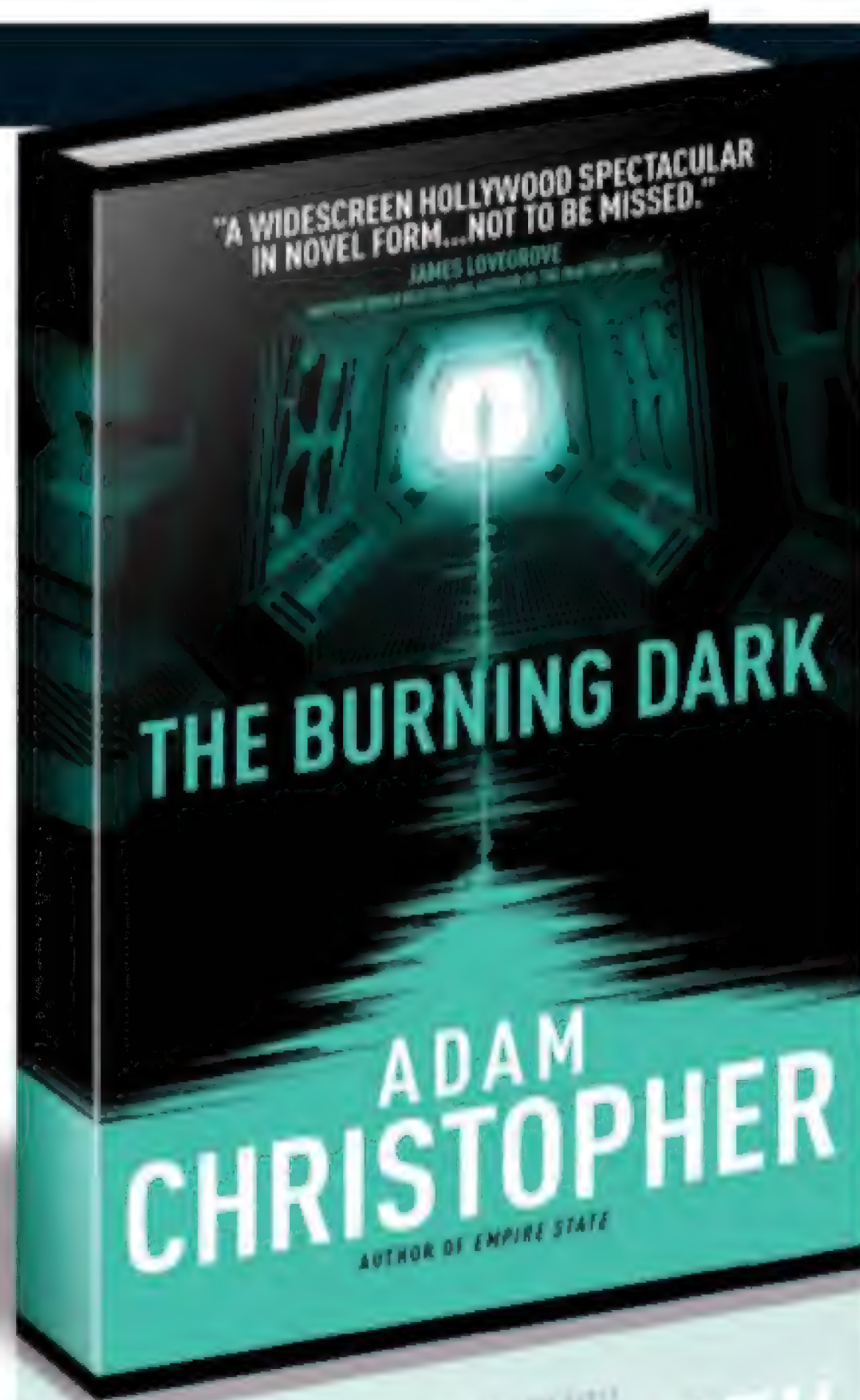
"But violence followed its printing of the food product Quorn, a micro-protein banned in the US under National Cattlemen's Beef Association Directive One. USDA-coordinated drone strikes scattered Quornist demonstrations, but failed to block media from Tranquillitatis 2064, where the organisers unfurled the flag of China's revolutionary post-human republic."

**Simon Ings' *Wolves* is out now from Gollancz.**



Mining on the asteroid surface, as predicted by Adam Christopher.





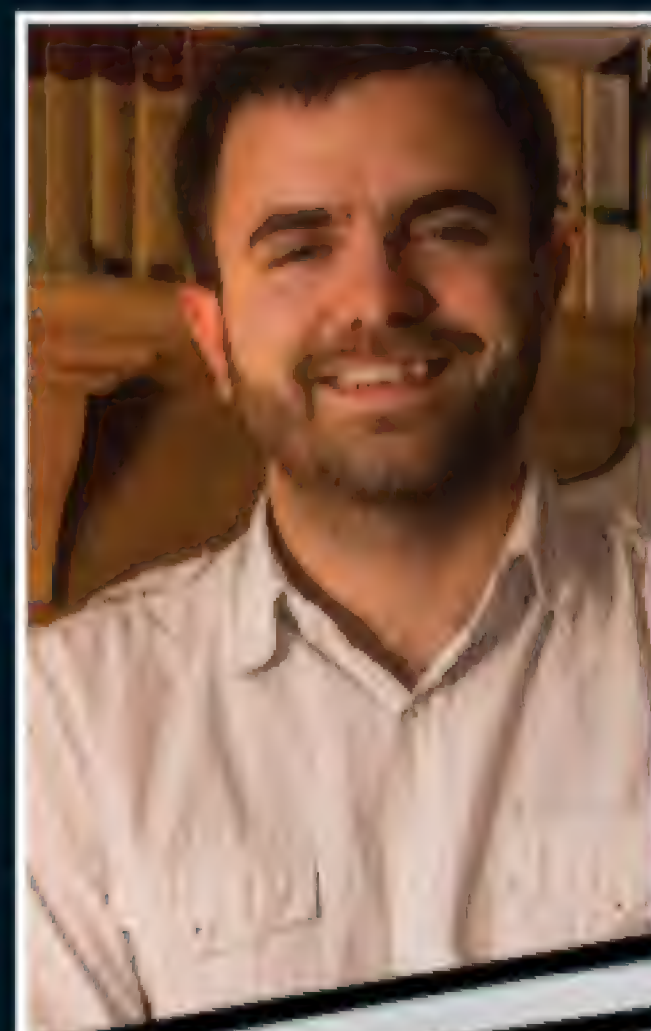
### THERE WILL BE... SPACE MINING

"It's all going to be about power; every home will have a tabletop fusion reactor, providing safe and clean energy independently of any national grid.

This will probably lead back to a more Fifties-tinged optimism for science, with the Fair timed to coincide with the first manned mission to Mars. Expect lots of concepts for more distant space exploration and, reflecting the Fair's theme of new energy sources, plenty of chatter about asteroid mining and gas extraction from the giant planets.

"We'll be looking out to the Solar System, but not just to see how far we can get; the focus will be on what we can bring back and how it will benefit humanity."

**Adam Christopher's *The Burning Dark* is available now from Titan.**



## THERE WILL BE... HELPFUL ALIENS

"After The Event of 2060, when a race of aliens called the Rumu landed on the Arctic cap, the exhibits at the World's Fair have taken on a new, unified purpose.

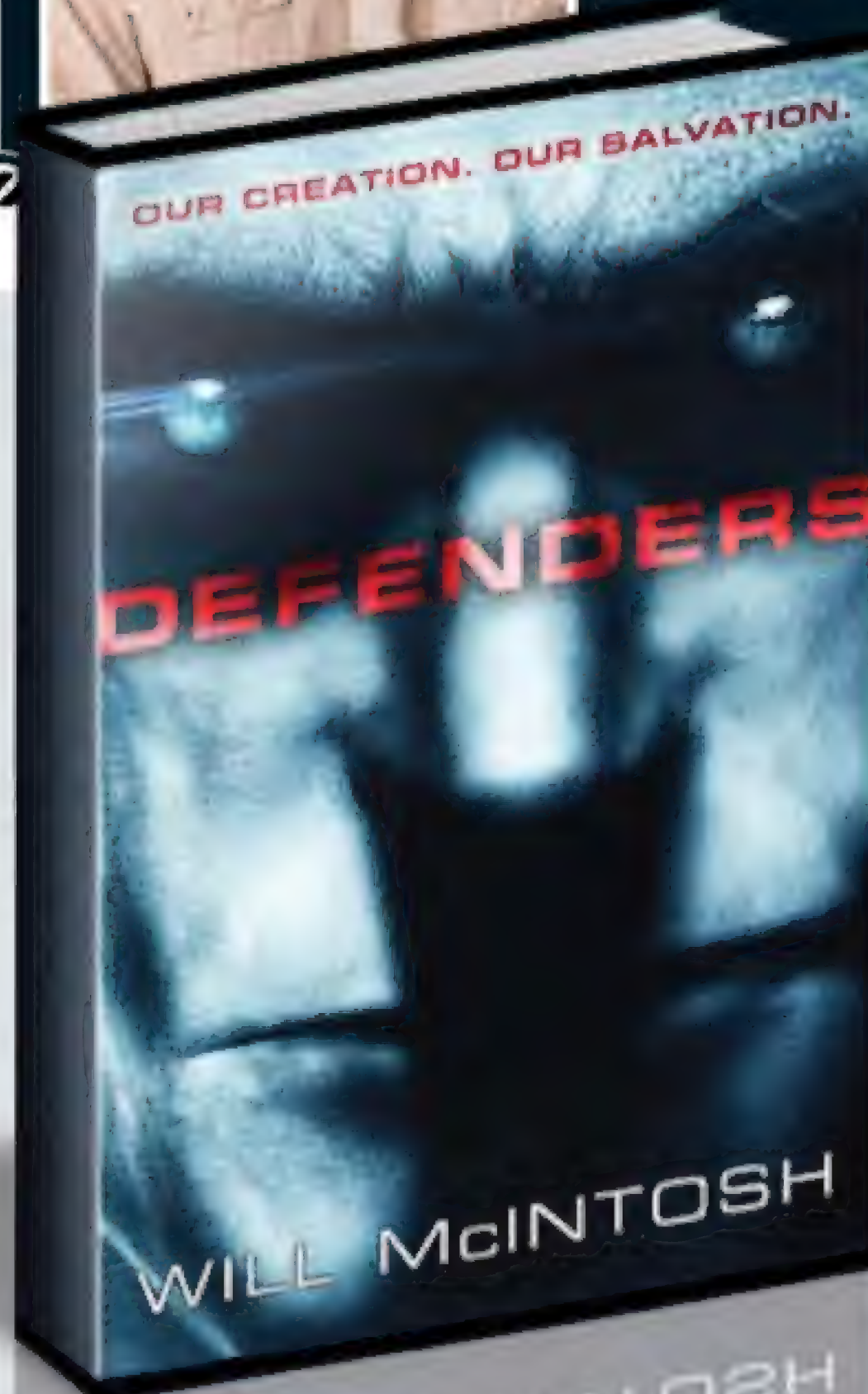
"The Rumu provided schematics for a 'Y Drive', a propulsion system that will carry a human ship to the Ant Nebula in 29 years. There, the Rumu promise, man will be provided the answer to the meaning of his existence. The World's Fair

is therefore dedicated to the systems for the Y Drive fleet.

"One stand shows off the Great Brazilian Space Elevator, the means by which material and manpower are being transported to the orbital shipyards.

"The nuclear industry is a big exhibit too, highlighting their plans for the sample pods that the Y Drive fleet will send back to Earth. Hundreds of pods will be accelerated home by the detonation of nuclear bombs: this will use up Earth's entire arsenal."

**Jon Wallace is the author of *Barricade*, out June 2014 from Gollancz.**



### THERE WILL BE... MINDREADERS

"We can expect staggering changes. The real action is going to be in biotechnology, because it's an area that is just opening up. For starters,

it will feature an exhibit on the latest breakthroughs in how you can have children that are smarter, stronger and healthier via genetic engineering. Genome sequencing will be routine, so the latest in genome-specific designer viruses aimed at making you more outgoing, happy etc might be on display, as well as technology aimed at securing your genetic material so it doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

"We're making great strides with brain imaging technology; there might be a booth where you'll be able to 'read' others' minds via remote imaging technology. Effectively, people will no longer be able to lie – imagine how that will change the world!"

**Will McIntosh's *Defenders* is out on 27 May from Orbit.**



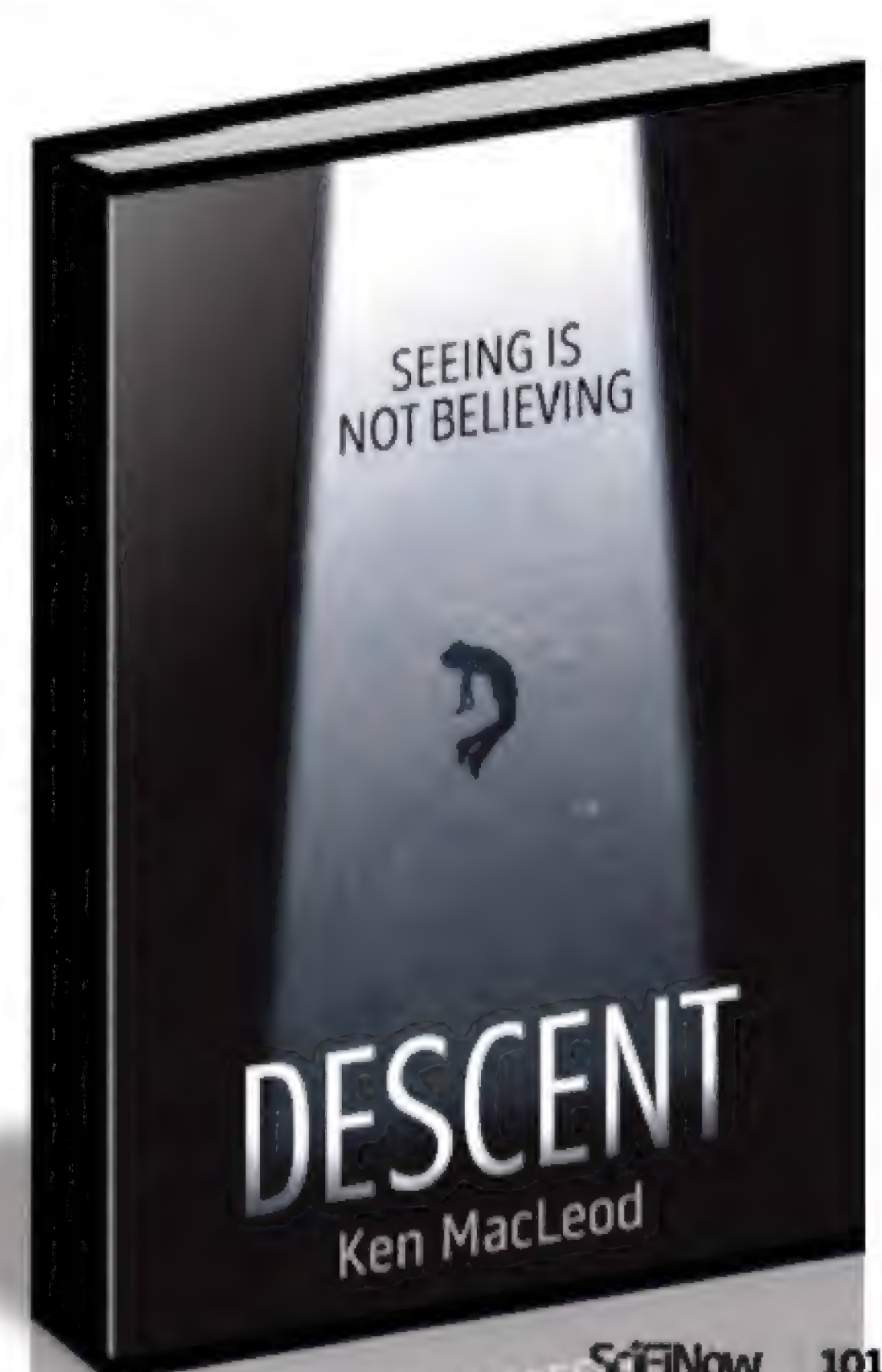
### THERE WILL BE... NO SURPRISES

"There'll be great geo-engineering schemes, self-driving cars, space elevators and a Moon base, and a robot that can dusting and take out garbage, but probably not. There'll be things we can't imagine and haven't thought of, for sure.

"But here in 2014, what might be most interesting is what visitors won't see. They won't see the swarm of satellites, drones, floating motes and static cameras; the clever software and hardware that lets them handle exhibits in what feels like real time; or the algorithms that let them meet friends in what feels like a spacious hall, though every square metre will be crowded.

"Visitors won't see all that, because that's how they'll see it. I think we can be fairly sure of that."

**Ken MacLeod's *Descent* is out now via Orbit.**





**Details** Writer: Alan Moore **Artist:** Kevin O'Neill **Publisher:** Knockabout **Price:** £9.99 **Released:** Out now

# NEMO: THE ROSES OF BERLIN

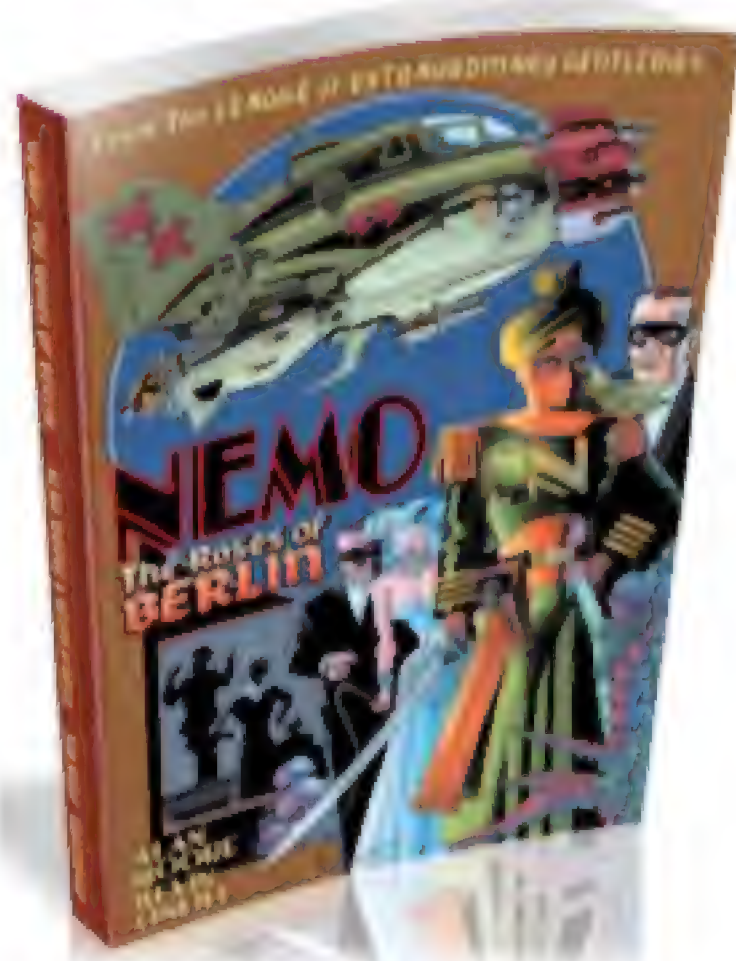
The Testament of Doctor Moore-buse

While the mainline *League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen* continues to float off into ever more esoteric territory, delighting fans with the wealth of allusions to decode and alarming casual readers with their sheer depth, the *Nemo* series – following the titular captain's daughter Janni Dakkar – takes a sudden swerve into the accessible after the opaque *Nemo: Heart Of Ice*. Relieved? Well, be careful what you wish for.

As usual for the meticulous magpie Alan Moore, his found-object world is richly constructed, and Kevin O'Neill renders a suitably sinister alternate World War II-era Berlin of harsh, expressionist angles and airships, *Metropolis* robots and *Cabinet Of Dr Caligari* sleepwalkers, all ruled over by Charlie Chaplin's Great Dictator – but far less densely layered and therefore less rewarding than usual.

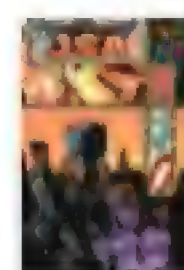
In lieu of the further reading most *League* books require – all part of the fun, of course – *The Roses Of Berlin* simply has huge tracts written in German, which isn't a particularly clever or interesting device, even if it is an authentic one, and the vast majority of the metatextual references can be instantly picked up by anyone with a passing interest in film history.

The structure contrasts neatly with the first Janni narrative – *Century 1910's*



disquieting rape-revenge fantasy – in which a similarly plodding underlying story was the background to a larger narrative. This time though, there's so little to chew on – all the world-building detail that Moore usually takes such time building up is blurted out fairly early on – that all you really have is a set of unlikely protagonists undertaking a chase/rescue mission in enemy territory with the interesting 30 per cent of the story taking place off panel.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★☆☆



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**JSA: The Liberty Files**  
Dan Jolley/Tony Harris  
A reimagining of Batman, Hourman and Doctor Mid-Nite get their *Casablanca* on.

**Details** Writer: Mike Costa **Artists:** Kris Anka, Jacob Wyatt, Michael Dialynas **Publisher:** Marvel/Panini **Price:** £10.99 **Released:** Out now

# THE ARMS OF THE OCTOPUS

The webbing crashers

While *Goblin Nation* gathers green steam over in Dan Slott's intense *Superior Spider-Man*, knockabout writer Mike Costa (*Transformers*, *GI Joe*) and warm-toned artist Kris Anka (*X-Men*) breeze into Doctor Spiderpus's world with the time-displaced founding X-Men, the Incredible Hulk and what looks like a bunch of classic Marvel villains for a lovely bit of bickering and classic Marvel hokum.

While X-Men and Hulk fans get this most months and aren't so easily impressed (although at one point a crate of puppies is used to calm Hulk down, making this a mandatory



purchase for a certain sort of reader), *The Arms Of The Octopus* is the sort of wonderful and inconsequential lark that Spider-fans have been in sore need of for about a year.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★☆☆

"A LOVELY BIT OF CLASSIC MARVEL HOKUM"

**Details** Writers: Andy Diggie, Adi Granov **Artist:** Adi Granov **Publisher:** Marvel/Panini **Price:** £10.99 **Released:** Out now

# CAPTAIN AMERICA: LIVING LEGEND

Star-spangled clanger

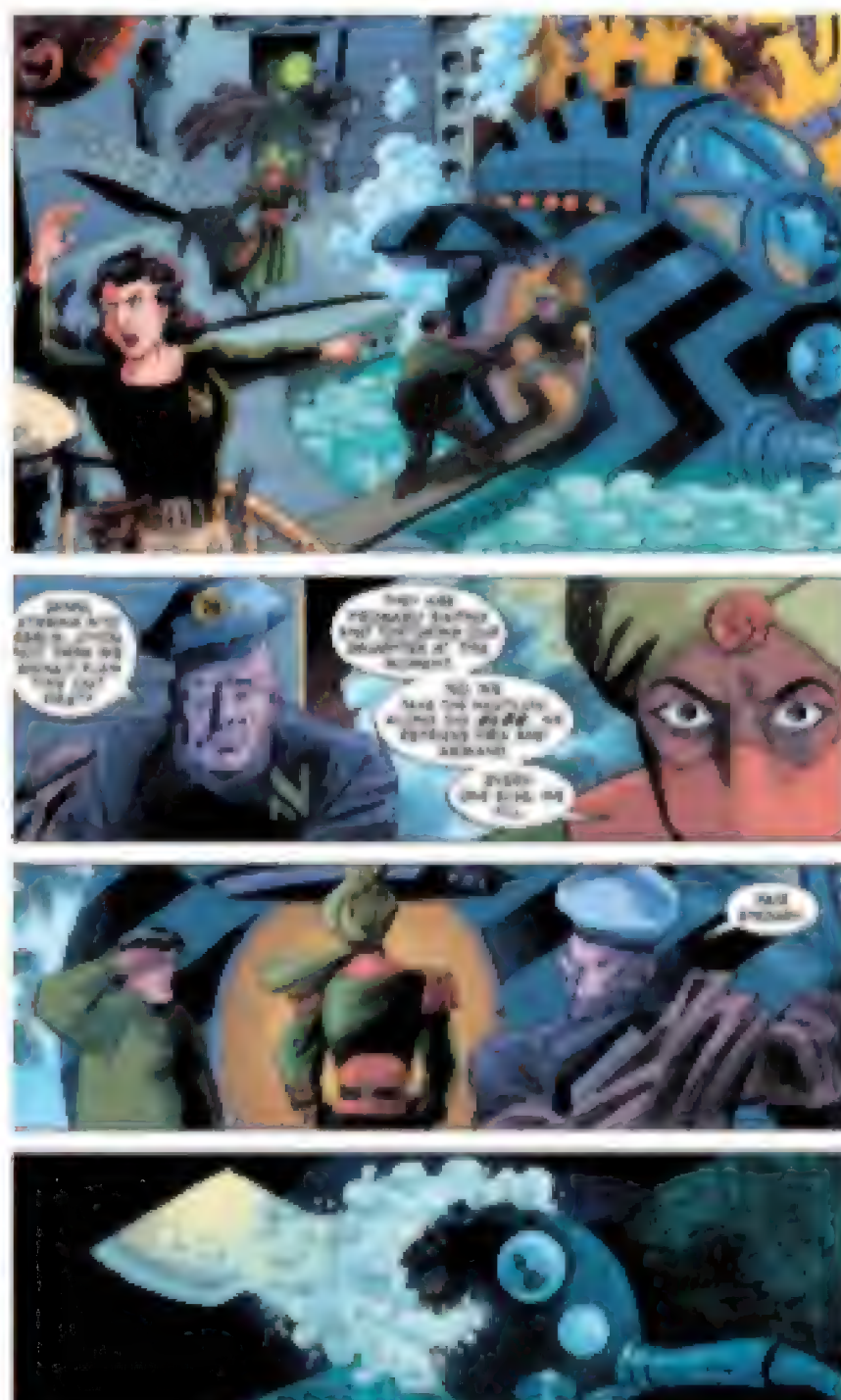
What *Extremis* did for Iron Man it fails to do for Captain America as Adi Granov brings a similar brand of body horror to the Sentinel of Liberty, this time alongside writer Andy Diggie (*Green Arrow: Year One*, *The Losers*).

Despite Jack Kirby's fondness for alien roller derbies and Rick Remender's recent trip to Dimension Z, Cap isn't automatically suited to hard sci-fi, and there's little emotional resonance in *Living Legend*. Granov is at his best drawing things – and Iron Man is basically a thing – and his faces look as empty and expressionless as videogame concept art, while landscapes are an empty expanse of clone tool.

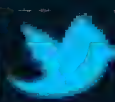


He does a decent action shot, but for the most part *Living Legend* is some good art with no real heart.

**James Hoare**  
**VERDICT** ★★☆☆



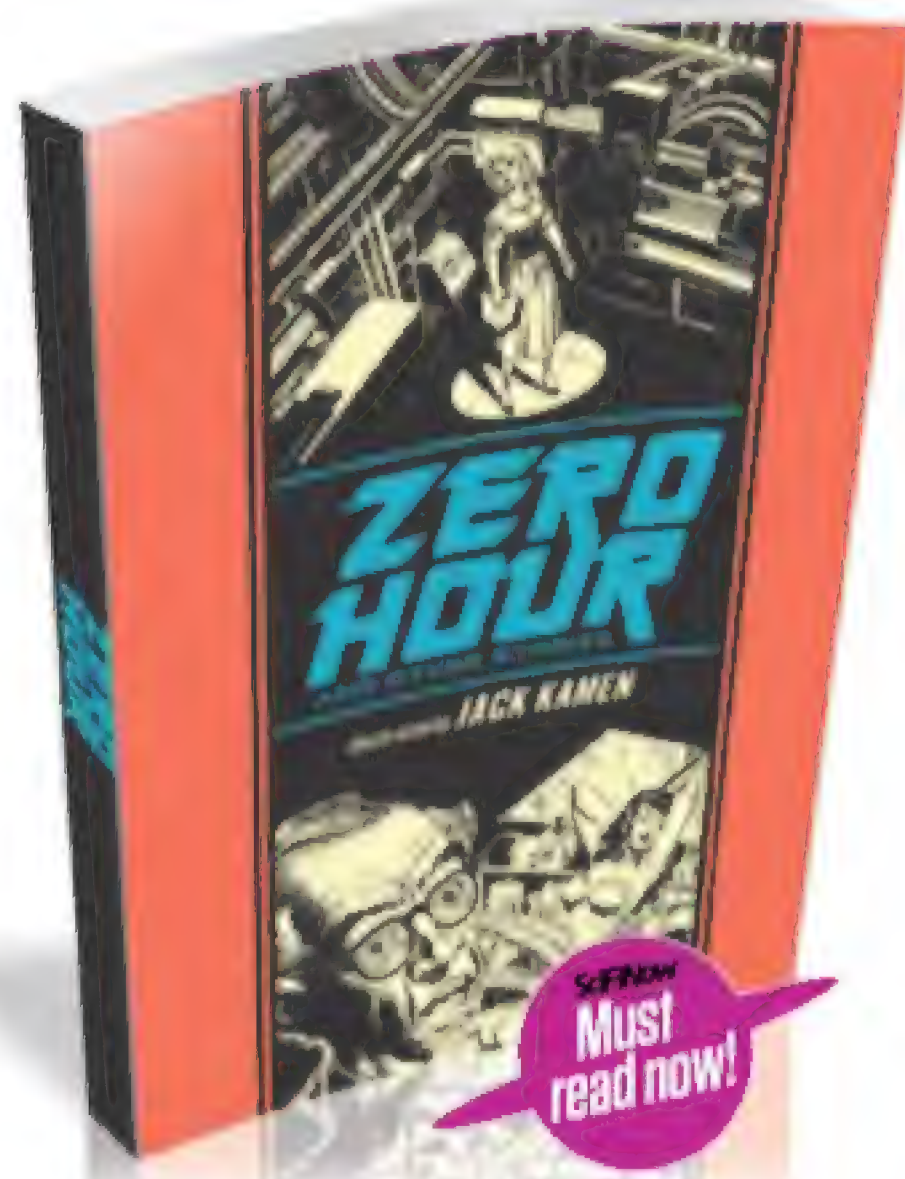




**Details** Writers: William M Gaines, Al Feldstein, Ray Bradbury **Artist:** Jack Kamen  
**Publisher:** Fantagraphics **Price:** \$28.99 (approx £17.30) **Released:** Out now

# ZERO HOUR AND OTHER STORIES

Weird science fiction



**Before the company's** implosion in the wake of *Seduction Of The Innocent's* moral witch hunt, EC filled the newsstands with thrilling titles whose diverse subject matter – horror, science fiction, romance, humour – belied a handful of constants, namely the firm hand on the tiller of boss William Gaines, editors Harvey Kurtzman and Al Feldstein and the pristine artwork of one of the most talented pools of artists in this often-overlooked age of comics.

## “COME WITH A WICKED, BLACKLY COMIC STING IN THEIR TALES”



While the likes of Wally Wood, Joe Orlando, John Severin and Frank Frazetta later found work at the Big Two or in Hollywood, many quietly slipped under the radar when the age of the anthology gave way to the age of the superhero. Jack Kamen, who died in 2008, was one of those incredible creators who left comics behind when EC was de-clawed. EC's adventures into sci-fi had begun by plagiarising veteran author Ray Bradbury, but by 1953 they were doing so with the author's blessing.

Though the Bradbury adaptations in *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* (and *Weird Science-Fantasy!*) compiled in *Zero Hour And Other Stories* number only three out of 20, they set the tone of the book perfectly. All bitter ironies and pyrrhic victories, these short and sharp future fables come with the same wicked, often blackly comic sting in their tail as EC's better-known horror titles, and Kamen proves his status immediately with dizzying detail – faces forever contorted in horror or shock, eyes wide with desperation and clothes hanging slack with sweat as events unravel.

The artist cut his teeth on romance comics before EC had him drawing cutting teeth in the



likes of *Tales From The Crypt*, and his skill at beautiful dames, lovelorn lab assistants and hen-pecking housewives was abused to its full. Even within *Zero Hour's* glorious selection box of rogue robots, shrinking serums and suspended animation, forbidden or unrequited romance is rarely far from the page, giving Kamen plenty of room to draw Fifties pin-ups in peril.

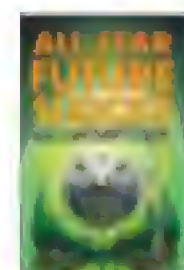
Although the sexism is obviously a product of the era – patronising, perhaps, but hardly malicious – that the problem hasn't exactly gone away over half a century later might make it difficult to see past EC's depiction of women and appreciate that his depiction of men – faithless husbands, lustful loners and abusive elders – isn't hugely flattering either, despite their privileged status.

While this says a great deal about the gender politics playing out in the background while these strips were put together, it says just as much about perceptions of immorality. The constant sense of 'be careful what you wish for' (usually what they wish for is women) hovering over each conclusion tethers the button-down values of Fifties America like an anchor made of picket fences.

A wonderful compendium and a fascinating glimpse into a society that perhaps hasn't changed as much as we'd like, *Zero Hour And Other Stories* is also a workman-like masterpiece in elegant storytelling from an artist and a set of writers at the pinnacle.

James Hoare

**VERDICT** ★★★★★



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**What appealed to you about the Green Turtle?**

The Green Turtle was created in the Forties by Chu F Hing, one of the first Asian-Americans to work in the American comics industry.

Rumour has it that Chu wanted his hero to be a Chinese-American, but his publisher didn't think that would sell, so Chu drew the Green Turtle so that we almost never get to see the hero's face. Rumour is that Chu did this so that he could imagine his hero as he'd originally intended: as a Chinese-American. Because *Blazing Comics* was so short-lived, we never find out the Green Turtle's secret identity or his secret origin, and his ethnicity is never confirmed. It felt like there was a story there, so Sonny [Liew, artist] and I created *The Shadow Hero*, a six-issue miniseries that shows how a Chinese-American teenager becomes the Green Turtle, the first Asian-American superhero.

## “ALMOST EVERY SUPERHERO LIVES BETWEEN WORLDS”

**Did it seem obvious to link this character with the immigrant experience?**

I'm the child of immigrants: my mum was born in mainland Chinese and my dad in Taiwan. I've lived my whole life between cultures. Because I draw heavily from my own life when I write, *The Shadow Hero* gravitated towards the immigrant experience as I pieced the script together. The creators of almost every major superhero were children of immigrants. Almost every superhero lives between two worlds, two identities, which reflects the daily reality of immigrants and their children. For instance, I had two different names: a Chinese one when I was at home and an English one for school. I spoke two languages and operated within two cultures.

**Have you brought in any more of your own experiences to *The Shadow Hero*?**

I have to write from my life; I don't know how to write any other way. Hank Chu, our protagonist, is a Chinese-American teenager who eventually dons a cape and becomes the Green Turtle. Sonny and I use becoming a superhero as a metaphor for becoming an American.



*The Shadow Hero* is ongoing digitally for Kindle, Nook and iOS, with a collected edition coming in July.





Cover art by Ming Doyle



# WHO'S WATCHING THE WATCHMAN?

Coheed And Cambria singer Claudio Sanchez and wife/creative parter Chondra Echert on their new series, *Translucid*...

WORDS DOM PEPIATT

Imagine a *Batman* arc written by *Strange Case Of Dr Jekyll And Mr Hyde* author Robert Louis Stevenson, complete with all the psychoactive drugs, gothic introspection and thematic playfulness that would entail. Imagine that book, injected with colour schemes and concepts that seem to have leapt straight from The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* film. That, at its most basic, is what you can expect from *Translucid*, Claudio Sanchez and Chondra Echert's most recent outing, following the couple's flirtation with the zombie apocalypse in *Key Of Z*, their self-effacing musical adventures in *Kill Audio* and their sprawling sci-fi epic *The Amory Wars*.

The battle between good and evil has seen its fair share of iterations throughout history, one of which is Batman and his ceaseless quests against the Joker. But what would happen if Bats' moral compass began to slip? That's the question posed by Sanchez and Echert's latest six-issue series, an introspective journey into the mind of a hero and unflinching study of what lies beneath the mask on the last day of the Navigator's life.

"The character of the Navigator, from a very young age, has procured this learned helplessness in his life," explains Echert. "He's always had to rely on other people for everything, and it was in a way that was always very encouraged. The Navigator has been addicted to depending on people, and – in becoming the hero, in putting on the mask – he finally finds this part of his life where he can be self-sufficient." It's no secret that the story of *Translucid* is inspired by the bipolar relationship shared by Bats and the Joker, but it seems to be rooted in distinctly contrasting origins. Where Batman was forced into vigilantism through the brutal murder of his parents, the Navigator is rebelling against that overbearing power from his childhood, asserting his identity in the only way he knows how: by getting rid of it. It's as if Batman has been deconstructed and rebuilt with a Freudian textbook at hand. "I've been a fan of Batman for so long," explains Sanchez, "and I've been watching him and the Joker, observing that relationship grow. After a while, you begin to decode it. I've loved these characters for so long, it's only natural that after a while I've begun to unravel them."

This isn't your typical superhero comic, though; *Translucid* avoids the clichés the genre is littered with. There are no superpowers in the Navigator's world, for example; everything is man-made, including our protagonist's holograph-projecting belt that lies at the root of his heroism. "We struggled with the idea



of the belt," admits Echert. "We asked ourselves, 'Is it something that was going to be rooted in science? Is it something that's going to be practical?' But then we kinda realised it doesn't matter. Because the story isn't about him, the Navigator, in his day-to-day life and day-to-day fights; it's about the darkness beneath that. It's about the relationships he's had with the people around him, and the emotions he feels as a result of that."

The duo's work has often alluded to drug use and addiction, something that has played a very real part in both writers' lives. *Translucid* seems to continue that narrative trend in their work, but offers a more intimate look at the idea of co-dependency, painting it in a more romantic light. "In a lot of ways," Echert explains, "this is a story about breaking the cycle of dependency and one person having to finally say: 'I'm not going to be this anymore. I'm not going to do this anymore.'"

It makes sense to use the dependent relationship between a protagonist and his arch nemesis to frame a narrative like the one in *Translucid*.

With the majority of superhero comics focusing on the façade – the masked projections of the heroes beneath – it makes sense for Sanchez and Echert to dig a little deeper and examine the dirt beneath the fingernails of the heroes we grew up with. They say that your life flashes before your eyes as you shuffle off the mortal coil, and that is precisely what's happening to the Navigator (with a little help from his long-term nemesis and counter-weight, the Horse).

"The whole idea of the story is that our hero, the Navigator, comes into this world as a new thing – a new hero," Sanchez tells us. "But that

inspires all these villains to come crawling out of the woodwork too, and the thing about a hero is that he's only as powerful as his villains. The Navigator begins to rely on this one in particular – the Horse – to make himself a better hero."

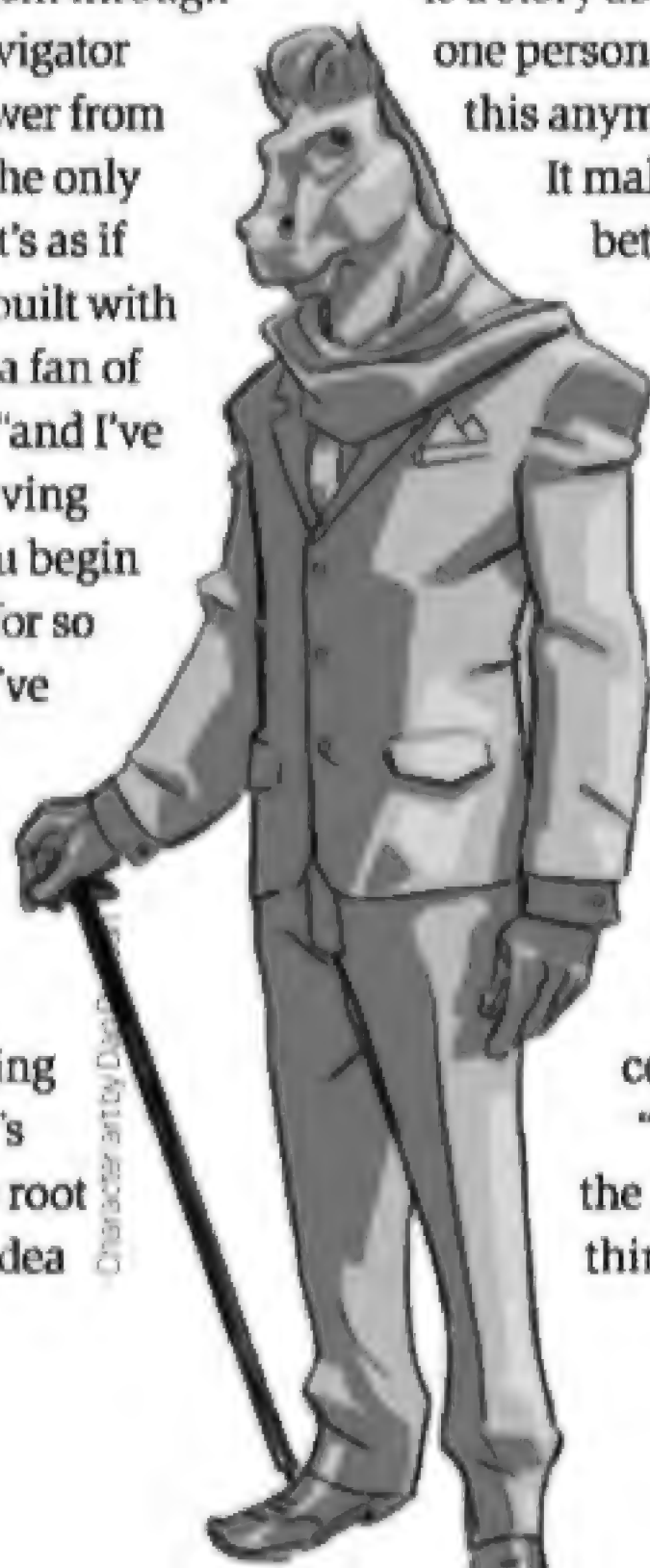
This is a book about morality; the gulf of grey between the absolutes of right and wrong. Although the Horse and Navigator have their roles, 'good' and 'evil' aren't so binary in *Translucid*. "The opportunity arises for a villain to step up and guide the Navigator, to lead him," explains Echert. "Because of the Navigator's learned helplessness, he just goes with it – it's natural to him."

Where the likes of *Watchmen* and *Arkham Asylum* have explored these tropes before, neither have been worked on by a couple whose creative experiences almost mimic the memetic psyche shared by protagonist and antagonist. "We were talking the other day about the similarities in a working relationship and in marriage and how they, in some ways, can mirror that of a hero and of a villain," explains Echert. "There's an element of knowing almost too much about someone – so much that the other person becomes vulnerable to you. In that way, you've got the potential to become the villain in any relationship where you're close to someone, because you have access to their Kryptonite; you know the thing that will break them down. So in a lot of ways, there's romance-to-hero and villain stories, in the same way there's a romance to working with

someone, whether they're your partner or not." ☺



*Translucid* #1 by Claudio Sanchez and Chondra Echert, with art by Daniel Bayliss, is published by BOOM! Studios and is out on 16 April.





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COMPLETE GUIDE

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AN IMAGINE  
MONTHLY



"ONE EPISODE  
I MIGHT BE THE  
WORLD EXPERT ON  
SEA POLLUTION OR  
SOMETHING, AND THE  
NEXT EPISODE I WAS  
SAYING, 'THE SEA?  
WHAT'S THE SEA?'"

JOHN NOLAN





# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO DOOMWATCH

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT BRITISH SCI-FI SHOWS OF THE SEVENTIES, DOOMWATCH REMAINS RELATIVELY UNDERAPPRECIATED THANKS TO A WIPED THIRD SEASON AND THE LACK OF A PROPER DVD RELEASE. WE TALK TO THE CAST AND CREATORS TO FIND OUT JUST HOW THIS DARK AND AFFECTING SHOW PUT ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS ON THE AGENDA FOR MILLIONS OF BRITONS...

WORDS CHARLES NORTON

**"The honeymoon of science is over and married life is not so rosy." (*Radio Times* – 5 February 1970).**

On 5 February 1970, a striking image appeared on the front cover of the latest edition of the *Radio Times*, depicting a model aeroplane sitting inside a black, expensive-looking leather briefcase. The aeroplane was buckled and molten, like an Airfix model left too long on the radiator, as if the plastic had been somehow eaten away. The cover heralded a new television drama series, due to air that Monday evening. It was called *Doomwatch*.

*Doomwatch* was the BBC's very first all-colour science fiction series, telling the story of a government department in London tasked with examining the new risks to mankind posed by advances in science and technology. The department's job was that of a scientific watchdog: to police scientific progress. Their remit took in corrupt pharmaceutical companies, unsafe pesticides, noise pollution and hidden killers in the air we breathe and the water we drink.

At the peak of its popularity, it was estimated that between 15 and 20 per cent of the UK's population were watching *Doomwatch*. The title became a household name, and it genuinely did get politicians talking about things that they hadn't talked about before – things like lead additives in petrol. It may be a bit much to say that *Doomwatch* actually changed the world, but it gave it a bloody good try.

The programme was the brain child of three men: an unlikely (and often uneasy) partnership of a pioneering research scientist, jobbing scriptwriter and tough BBC producer. The research scientist was Dr Kit Pedler, the head of the electron microscopy department at the London Institute of Ophthalmology, and the writer was Gerry Davis, who had worked as script editor on *Doctor Who* between 1966 and 1967, and together with Pedler had created the Cybermen.

The tough BBC producer was Terence Dudley, who began to work on *Doomwatch* having previously helmed thriller serial *The World Of Tim Frazer* (1960-1) and detective series *Cluff* (1964-5). It was apparently Dudley who thought up the title for Pedler and Davis' new programme idea, which they brought to BBC bosses in 1969.

"Terence was quite a strong character. He liked to make his mark on stuff," recalls *Doomwatch*'s first production designer, Ian Watson. "He wasn't just a man who scribbled in the back room; he had a very strong influence."

There was something of a changing roster of principal characters in *Doomwatch*, as few of them stuck around for more than a season. The leader of the team was former atomic scientist Dr Spencer Quist. Short of fuse and long of service, he was played by John Paul, probably then best known for his regular role in ITV's *Probation Officer* (1959-61). Alongside him was Simon

Oates as the suavely lecherous Dr John Ridge and Joby Blanshard as grounded northern computer scientist Colin Bradley. Also joining in episode one was Robert Powell, then a fairly unfamiliar face on the screen, whose name was largely to be made by *Doomwatch* through his turn as the likeable scientist Toby Wren.

The principal production designer on that first season (designing nearly a quarter of the episodes) was, of course, Watson – a BBC staff designer who had recently worked on *Doctor Who*. "I helped set up the opening credits and stuff like that," says Watson. "As the first-up designer, I had to help set up the offices for the *Doomwatch* brigade."

The title of the programme was – at least in the first episode – taken from the name of the massive cutting-edge computer system that was installed in Dr Quist's offices. A series of whirring boxes and tape machines, Watson recalls that the construction of the *Doomwatch* computer's 'analogue/digital hybrid' was contracted out to Ted Dove Associates Ltd, a company based at Pinewood Studios who Watson had just worked with on *Doctor Who*. "There were a few flashing lights and the reels went backwards and forwards," he says. "They came in every week, and the electricians connected them up and off they went. In those days, of course, it was just endless reams of paper. There weren't screens or anything like that... They looked as if they were cutting-edge stuff. Now, we've got more than it took to go to the Moon on our mobile phones." ➤



➤ *Doomwatch's* opening episode ('The Plastic Eaters') was about a contagious virus that dissolved plastic, hence that first *Radio Times* cover, and went before the cameras of studio TC3 at BBC Television Centre on 28 November 1969. Due to its complexity and the fact that it was the first episode, it was allowed a slightly greater allocation of resources than would ordinarily be the case, including the luxury of an extra day on the studio floor.

However, subsequent stories were rarely given more than two days in the studio (plus a few days out on location). "We worked on very, very strict budgets in those days," says Watson. "You didn't have money; you had man-hours, which was worked out as, 'how long would it take a man to set up a flat and paint it?' And you had 1,500 man-hours for the whole bloody lot. The first one, you had more man-hours because you had to actually build new. Every two to three weeks, you had the same set in again, and it was set up in a certain part of the studio, and all the other bits that you had to create had to be fitted in around that."

One of the principal writers on that first year (alongside Davis and Pedler themselves) was Derby-

based script writer Don Shaw. "I came to be involved," recalls Shaw, "because Gerry Davis had been the script editor on *The First Lady* – a series starring Thora Hird [that Shaw had worked on], and he wanted me for *Doomwatch*."

Shaw first came to *Doomwatch* with the idea for an episode that would become 'Train And De-Train' (broadcast 20 April 1970).

**The episode warned** of the dangers posed by pesticides to the ecosystem of the British countryside, and was inspired by the famous ecological bestseller *Silent Spring*, which with its 'fable for tomorrow' could already be seen as something of a prototype *Doomwatch*, and had already inspired a 1964 *Doctor Who* episode on the same topic.

"The idea of *Silent Spring* was what drew me to the programme," recalls Shaw. "You have to remember that the only publicity about environmental concerns was very limited in the late Sixties – my first script was commissioned in 1969."

'Train And De-Train' would be one of three episodes Shaw would write for *Doomwatch* – all with an

appropriately cautionary tone for the potential dangers of our new scientific world. The cast and crew (for the most part) made for a strong team in that first year. However, the original line-up didn't last long, mostly thanks to the sudden and traumatic events of Season One's now legendary final episode, 'Survival Code'.

The series had by now established the charismatic Powell as a television favourite through his portrayal of earnest young scientist Toby Wren. It therefore came as something of a shock to millions of viewers when, in the closing seconds of 'Survival Code', Toby died – spectacularly. Poor Toby is attempting to diffuse a bomb concealed under a coastal pier, when the device explodes. Cut to the grim face John Paul's Spencer Quist staring through a broken window. The credits rolled, and the nation reeled.

"It was all done in the studio," recalls Watson of Wren's explosive farewell. "Apart from a bit of filming in which we floated a rather nasty bit of polystyrene with a bomb on it, the rest of it, with the extraordinary effects and the end of the pier, we all did in the studio."

The *Radio Times* reportedly received more letters about the shock death of Toby than about any other topic in its history, and with the nation still recovering from the death of the programme's best-loved character, *Doomwatch* was rapidly re-commissioned for a second series. Joining the show (nominally as a replacement from Powell's character) was John Nolan as Geoff Hardcastle, another enthusiastic young idealist who arrives in Quist's shell-shocked department in the series opener 'You Killed Toby Wren'.

**"THE COMPUTERS LOOKED LIKE CUTTING  
EDGE STUFF. NOW, WE'VE GOT MORE  
THAN IT TOOK TO GO TO THE MOON ON  
OUR MOBILE PHONES"** IAN WATSON



The 1972 *Doomwatch* movie was released in the US as *Island Of The Ghouls*, thanks to its gruesome subject matter.



The *Doomwatch* film was directed by Taste The Blood Of Dracula's Peter Sasdy.





Rehearsals for Series Two began at the BBC's North Acton rehearsal rooms mere months after Series One. Although Powell had left the programme, he was still a presence throughout the rehearsal period, as he was working in the same building on a new adaptation of Thomas Hardy's *Jude The Obscure*.

"Those were the days when we rehearsed for ten days or something," remembers Nolan. "We did a bit of filming – pre-series filming, and then rehearsed all the studio stuff. It was great going down to North Acton; it was a good sort of structure we had. It was nice to have rehearsal time... You could investigate the script and get a bit of depth."

*Doomwatch* built on the viewing figures of its first series to make the second season an even bigger hit, at least in terms of the number of people watching. However, the critical reception was less rapturous, and the suggestion has been made that perhaps something of what had made that first series so special failed to carry through into the show's second run.

"The second series didn't have quite the same impetus that the first series had," says Nolan. "One of the problems was that they wanted to get it while it was pretty hot, and I don't think they quite had the urgency and the relevancy of the scripts all the way through that the first series had. I think Bob Powell had got an inkling of this."

By now there was some serious friction within the *Doomwatch* production office as well. Martin Worth, who was a key writer on both Series Two and Three, ➤



## RE-ENTRY FORBIDDEN

### How *Doomwatch* entered the space race with *Doctor Who*

#### Among the better-known

*Doomwatch* episodes is 'Re-Entry Forbidden' (the sixth episode of Series One). The episode centres on the first attempt to get a British astronaut into space and the problems that ensue when something goes wrong with his nuclear-powered rocket. However, despite being well received, this episode's modern reputation largely rests on its connection with another television programme altogether: *Doctor Who*.

By pure coincidence, a *Doctor Who* story called 'The Ambassadors Of Death' – also about a British-manned space-mission gone wrong – was in production at exactly the same time and in exactly the same studios as 'Re-Entry Forbidden'.

'The Ambassadors Of Death' was shot from 29 January to 27 March 1970 in studios TC1 and TC3, while 'Re-Entry Forbidden' was shot in TC1 on 10-11 February 1970, moving in to use the same floor space that had just been vacated by *Doctor Who*. With both productions doing similar stories about present-day space exploration, the two shows decided to share sets.

"I created a kind of space capsule with two or three astronauts in it," remembers Ian Watson. "[*Doctor Who* thought] 'We'll have a bit of that and save some money'... The capsule was basically made out of bits of ply and vacuum-formed PVC really. I built that first, and that was then annexed by the *Doctor Who* designer [David Myerscough-Jones], because in those

days if you issued the right paperwork and it didn't conflict, you could actually borrow bits of set. If it had only been used once by one show, the next programme could borrow it and use it on theirs.

"All the design department was on one floor next to the east tower. Obviously, we all talked about things with each other, and the designer of *Doctor Who* would come across and say, 'Oh, I've just seen that. Can I use that?' 'Yeah, sure. Doesn't matter.' I'm finished with it on whatever date and you have to make sure... that it didn't get destroyed and put on the wrong truck. It would be put in the saved bay and then they'd use it on their show."

Ultimately, 'Re-Entry Forbidden' gained more recognition via the video and DVD release of *Doctor Who* than it ever did through *Doomwatch*.

'The Ambassadors Of Death' is available on DVD, priced at £7.50.



**"I CREATED A SPACE CAPSULE WITH TWO OR THREE ASTRONAUTS IN IT, DOCTOR WHO THOUGHT 'WE'LL HAVE A BIT OF THAT!'"** IAN WATSON





# WAKING THE DEAD

The unlikely story of 'Winter Angel', the 1999 Doomwatch TV movie

On 7 December 1999, following an absence of nearly 30 years, *Doomwatch* returned to British television for a fourth (and to date final) time. The 90-minute pilot, titled *Doomwatch: Winter Angel*, was part of a concerted attempt to relaunch the show, picking up the story of Professor Quist and his department from where the BBC had left off in 1972.

The project was made under the auspices of producer Peter Lee-Wright and teams at Vanson Productions Ltd and Working Title Television. With an eye on a new series, Yvette Vanson (executive producer at Vanson Productions) and Peter Lee-Wright obtained the rights to *Doomwatch* through mutual friend Carol Topolski, the daughter of Kit Pedler.

Working with sci-fi novelist Ian McDonald and director Roy Battersby, Lee-Wright and Vanson created a new cast of characters for a re-tooled *Doomwatch* programme, retaining only Dr Quist from the original BBC series and creating a new scientist – Cambridge astrophysicist Dr Neil Tannahill – to be the show's new lead. The idea was then offered to a number of parties – including the BBC – in the late Nineties.

"We certainly hawked it round," says Lee-Wright, "but at the time there was quite a conservative view of drama... It was quite an anti-intellectual time, and there wasn't an awful lot of taste for [it]."

Rejections followed from both the BBC and the Sci-Fi Channel, before support was finally found in a rather unexpected place. "To our surprise, Corinne Hollingsworth, who was running drama at Channel 5, became interested. And certainly at that time, Channel 5 was not known for large or serious commissions. I think that it was really through the brokerage that Working Title had come on board, who obviously had a premium position in the marketplace and good sort of distribution potential."

With McDonald's script treatment being extensively revised by screenwriter John Howlett (from *If...* and *Game, Set And Match*), shooting began on the all-film production on location in Kent.

"The budget was £1.65 million. Not the most expensive ever, but pretty substantial, particularly for a Channel 5 show," says Lee-Wright. "Top-end still hovers over a million an hour, so it was certainly well-resourced at the time... We worked out of the oil-fired power station down at Dartford, and did lots of the country stuff around where I live."

Studio work, meanwhile, was completed at the famous Bray Studios on the banks of the Thames. Previously home to Hammer Film Productions in the Fifties and Sixties, it had also been used by the BBC for episodes of *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7* in the Seventies.

John Paul had died in 1995, and so for the TV movie a new actor was cast in the role of Spencer Quist. The part went to Philip Stone, a veteran film and television actor whose credits included *The Shining*, *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Avengers*. The new *Doomwatch* would be his last television credit. He died in 2003.

Meanwhile, taking the lead as Dr Neil Tannahill was Trevor Eve. Then best known for starring in *Shoestring* (1979-80) and *The Politician's Wife* (1995), Eve came to *Doomwatch* fresh from his work for the BBC on that year's new adaptation of *David Copperfield*, in which he played the villainous Mr Murdstone.

For the first time in the show's history, there was no *Radio Times* cover to mark the series' return (that week the honour went to *Jonathan Creek*). However, reviews were generally kind.

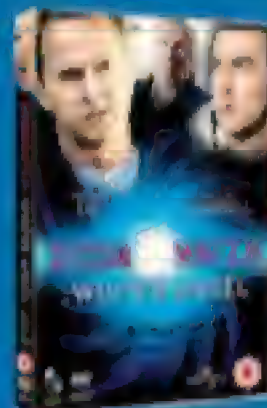
*Time Out* called it a "tautly scripted... highly engrossing tale, deftly interweaving a credible scientific context with a tense conspiracy." The omens appeared good that a series would follow on from the pilot. Indeed, had the series been on the BBC, it almost certainly would have done. However, in the far more capricious environs of a small commercial broadcaster like Channel 5, it was not to be.

"The original idea was to run it as a pilot for as an occasional series," says Lee-Wright. "But by that time, both Channel 5 and Working Title had changed their ownership structures, and therefore their business plans."

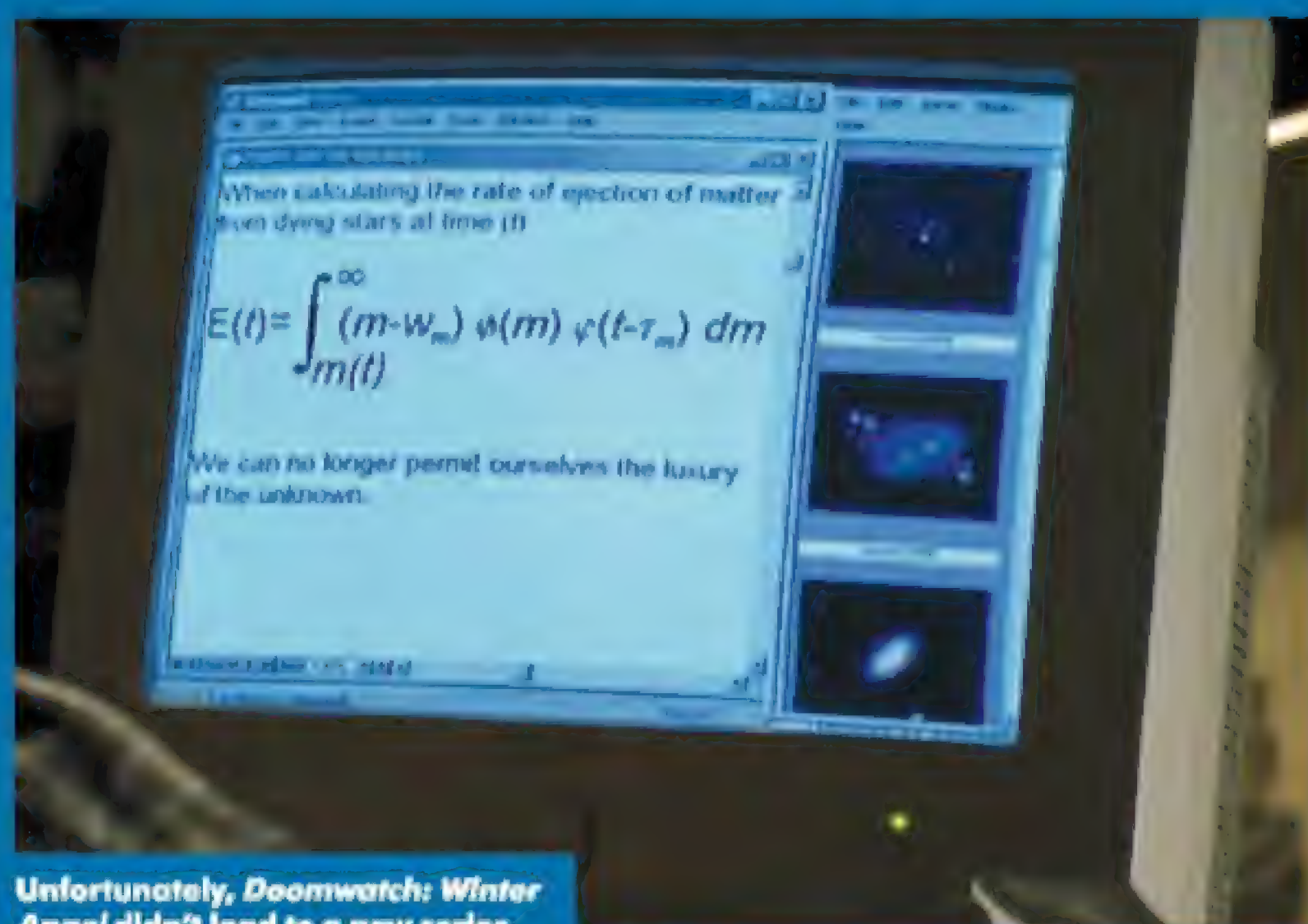
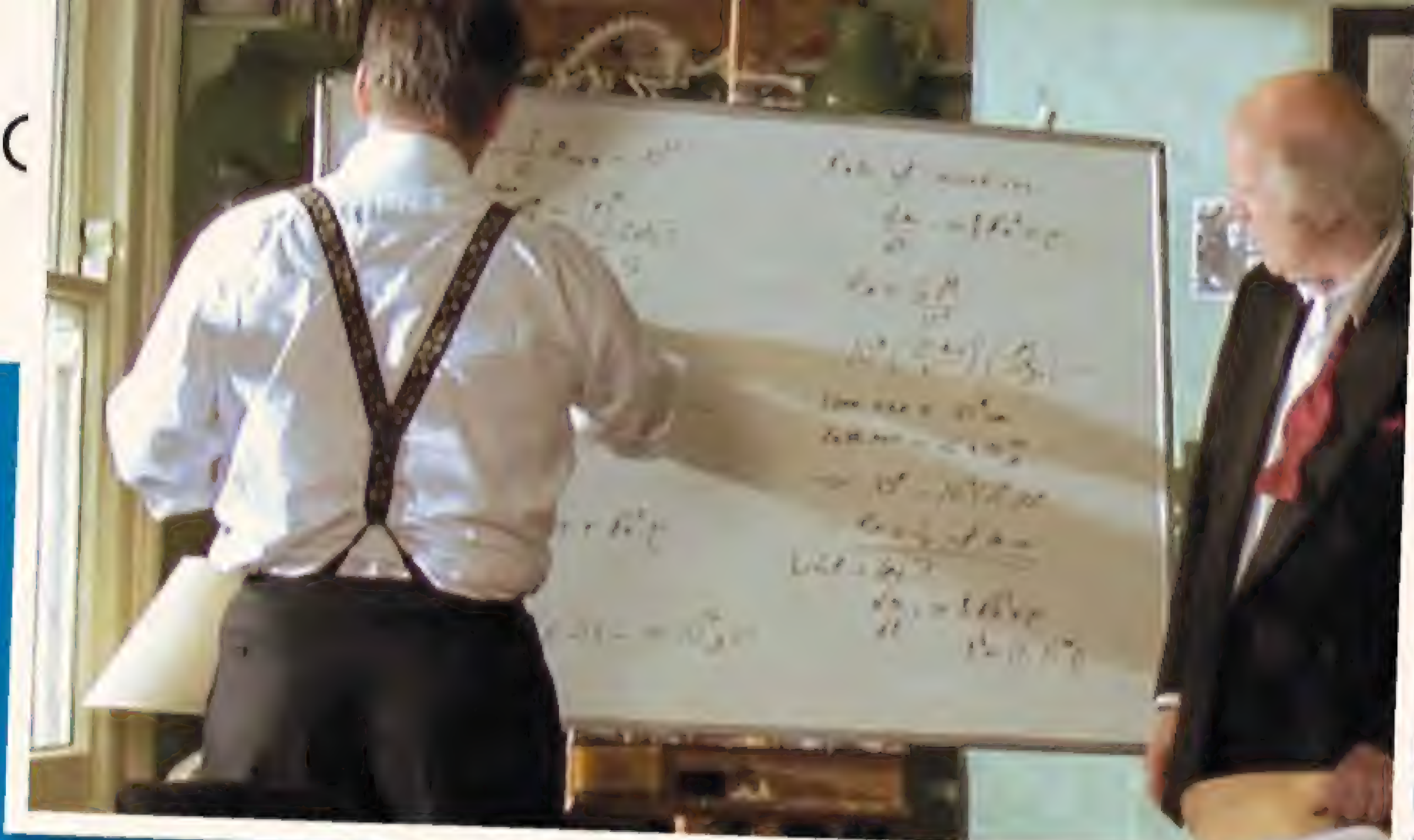
Only one further script outline was commissioned for the series, based on a treatment from Lee-Wright himself. This second episode would have focused on "a fundamentalist who was holding the powerful to ransom and using a biblical kind of seven days," explains Lee-Wright. "He was reversing the seven days of creation, with latter-day versions of undoing God's creation one day after another."

The story never progressed into production. Even if it had, it would probably have had to be without Eve. Later that year, the actor started filming as the lead in a new series for the BBC called *Waking The Dead*. It ran until 2011.

"Working Title TV was a sort of separate division from Working Title Films anyway, and we were working out of the TV arm and they were at that time engaged with things like Charlie Higson's remake of *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)* with Bob Mortimer and Vic Reeves, which obviously they decided was their more commercial objective."



*Doomwatch: Winter Angel* is out on DVD, priced at £2.93.



Unfortunately, *Doomwatch: Winter Angel* didn't lead to a new series.





➤ recalled for a BBC documentary in 2006 that: "The door of Terence Dudley's office was always just open, and Terry was sitting there waiting for me to come in. As soon as he saw me in the corridor, he'd grab me, come in and make me sit down for 45 minutes [while] he totally rubbished Gerry Davis and Kit Pedler. Then, as I came out of his office three quarters of an hour later, Gerry had got his door open, and he'd listened to all this, pulled me in and said, 'What's that bastard been telling you about me?' It wasn't surprising that Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis resigned."

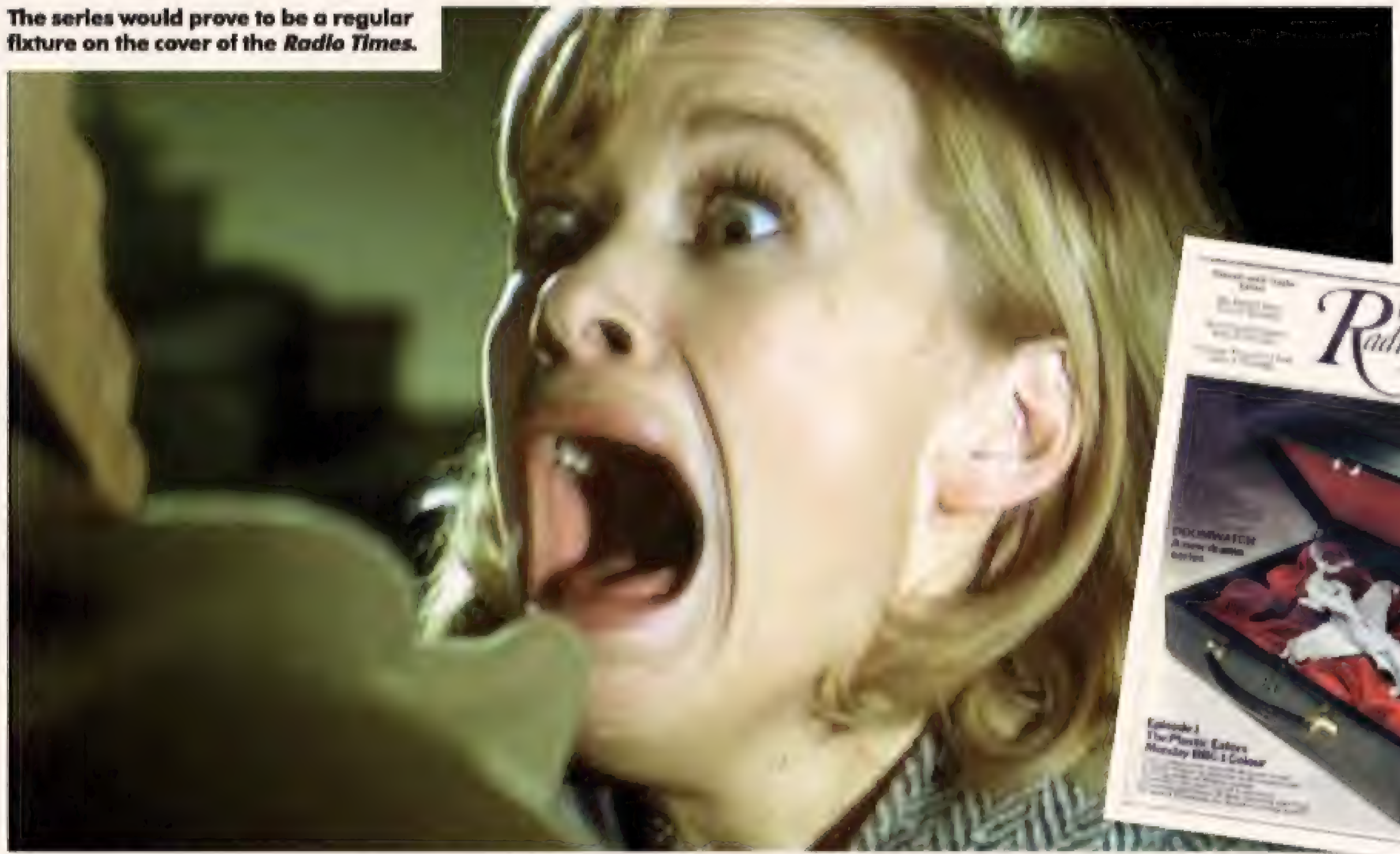
Following their departures, Davis was eventually credited as script editor on just under half of the second season. The job of commissioning and editing the rest of the series fell to Dudley and Worth. It is perhaps to their credit that a full series of 13 episodes ever made to air at all. However, that Dudley was also instrumental in creating the series' problems in the first place is maybe also worth considering.

"It became sort of obvious," says Nolan. "Some of the scripts were great, but what happened with my character was that he lacked consistency. One episode I might be the world expert on sea pollution or something, and the next episode I was saying, 'The sea? What's the sea?' It became quite difficult, because I couldn't actually root the character that I played in a solid and researched background. Gerry Davis should have been there."

**Despite behind-the-scenes** headaches, however, the second season actually did much better in the ratings than its predecessor. Although mixed in tone and direction, it is undeniable that some of the finest episodes were made in that second block.

A particular highlight was Worth's 'Invasion' (the second episode of Series Two), directed by Jonathan Alwyn, which with an audience of 14 million became one of the show's most popular episodes. 'Invasion' told of an accident that brings about the permanent evacuation of an isolated village. One of the first Series Two episodes to begin filming, it was partly shot on location in Grassington, Yorkshire, where the crew filmed both in the village itself and in a nearby cave system.

The series would prove to be a regular fixture on the cover of the *Radio Times*.



"We went down a pothole," recalls Nolan. "That was when I realised – and I think a lot of other people realised too – that potholing was not for me. We were not far down – probably only about 15 feet down and about 17 feet along – but I couldn't wait to get out. I thought, 'No thank you. I'll be very glad when I hear the word 'cut.''"

The closing scene of 'Invasion', in which an entire Yorkshire village is evacuated, was one of *Doomwatch*'s most ambitious sequences. Memorably, the show called on troops from the 7th Field Squadron of the Royal Engineers to help stage the scenes.

It was surprisingly common for members of the armed forces to be involved in television drama productions in the Seventies. A few months later, the combined forces of the Royal Marines and the RAF supplied a large detachment of troops to the production team of *Doctor Who* – something they'd previously done in 1968 too. "They loved playing soldiers," recalls Nolan. The British armed forces weren't involved in any major conflicts in the Seventies outside of Northern

Ireland, and so were left with far more time to give to the important business of fighting Cybermen and Sea Devils and evacuating small Yorkshire villages than could ever be the case today. "A more peaceful world," adds Nolan.

Series Two drew to a close with the broadcast of 'Public Enemy' by Patrick Alexander on 22 March 1971. For all of the ups and downs that were experienced at the production office, this episode's dark examination of metals manufacturing ended the season on a very strong note. The episode concluded with a powerful straight-to-camera sermon from Quist in which he says: "The way we're carrying on, the way we're polluting, overcrowding, chemicals, noise – we've got 30 years. 30 years of dirty, slow, dirty dying. Or else it's 30 years for us to clear up the mess. That's the choice. That's your only choice." The words were almost the same as those spoken by Pedler before work on the *Doomwatch* show had even started, when he'd told a BBC interviewer: "We are living on a leasehold planet and we don't ever pay the ground rent... [Our] way of life is using up the resources... Take action and demand changes."

In spite of the fundamental disagreements Pedler and Davis had with Dudley over the direction of the programme, maybe the show hadn't strayed all that far from its original message after all. As the second season came to a close, there was no doubt that the *Doomwatch* team would be coming back soon. However, it would be without Nolan.

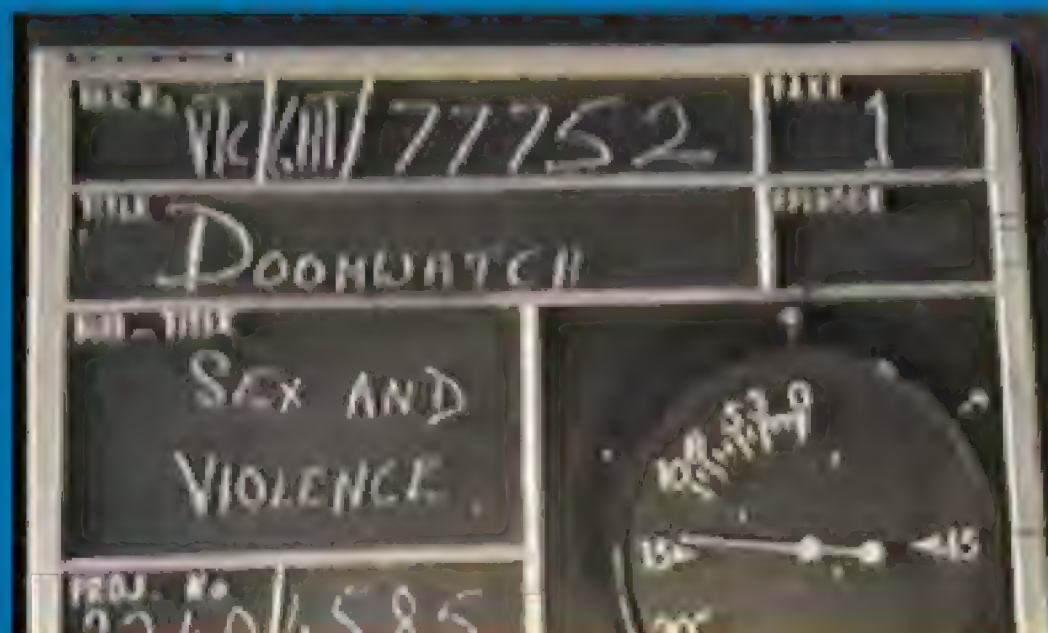
"I had a talk with Terence," he remembers. "We had a sort of end-of-show-party after the last episode that I did, and I had a lot of work on. I'd left drama school in September 1968, I think, and I hadn't had a day off. I wasn't complaining. I was quite happy, but I'd just gone from one thing to the next, and one series of that was fine for me."

Preparations for a third series of *Doomwatch* were underway before the close of summer 1971. However, production was delayed (possibly due to strike action at the BBC) and the next *Doomwatch* tale to reach our screens wasn't on television at all, but at the cinema. ➤



The *Doomwatch* movie, starring Judy Geeson, took the focus away from the original cast.





## BANNED

### The unseen episode of Doomwatch

The BBC has always had enemies. During the Sixties and Seventies, one of its most eccentric was the self-appointed watchdog of public decency, Mary Whitehouse. This avowedly conservative housewife was at the head of a campaign to 'clean up' what she saw as the degenerative liberalism of television and radio.

In 1971, at the peak of Whitehouse's influence in the popular press, Tory peer Lord Longford was appointed by the government to helm a committee examining the moral rectitude of British culture. On this committee were two of the country's best-known campaigners for 'Christian' values: Cliff Richard and Mary Whitehouse.

The socially relevant *Doomwatch* decided (as did many other programmes) to address this prevailing atmosphere of censure as an issue in their forthcoming season. The result was 'Sex And Violence', an episode written by Stuart Douglass and directed by *Doomwatch* regular Darrol Blake. The episode contained some very deliberate and cutting satires of Richard, Whitehouse and the purported morality for which they stood.

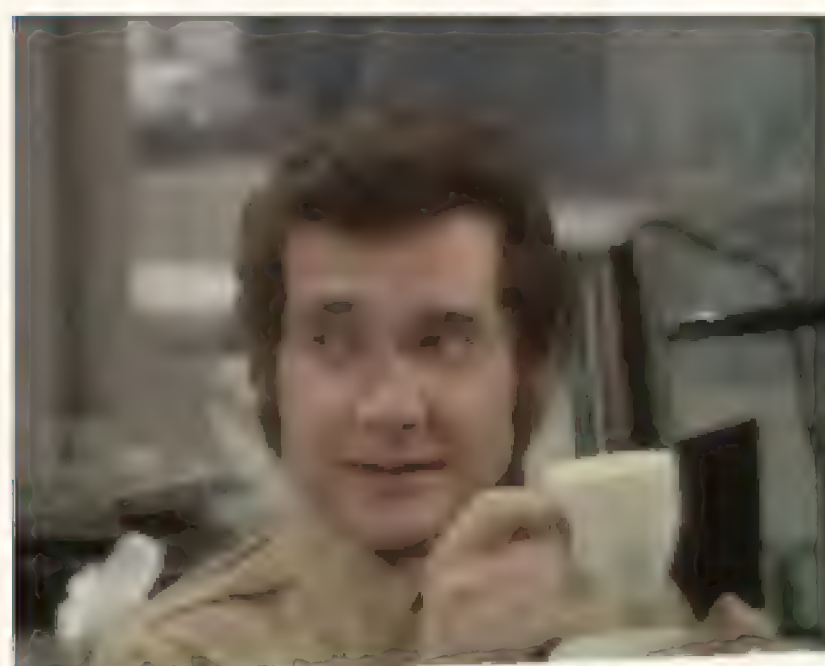
Following completion of the final edit of the episode, Darrol Blake left the UK for a month-long holiday in France. "When I got back I bought the *Radio Times*," the director later recalled. "I opened it to look at the spot where 'Sex And Violence' should be, and found another episode billed. This was how I found out that the whole thing had been scrapped."

A number of 'official' reasons were put out for the cancellation of the transmission. "Sub-standard production" was one that made it to the newspapers. Another claim was that the programme featured footage taken from a pornographic film (it didn't). Finally, the BBC settled on an official line that the programme had been cancelled because it contained archive footage of an execution that was unacceptable for broadcast. All of these statements were untrue. The production standards were no different to any other *Doomwatch* episode, and library footage of an execution had already been broadcast by the BBC in other programmes, and could easily have been edited out from the episode anyway.

'Sex And Violence' is the only episode of *Doomwatch* never to have been broadcast. The mastertape remains on the shelves of the BBC Archive Centre in Perivale, still awaiting a transmission slot.



The roster of *Doomwatch* was constantly changing, with few staying for the series' duration.







With only some of the episodes being archived, it's doubtful that we'll ever be able to view the show in its entirety.



The *Doomwatch* movie featured Ian Bannen's Del Shaw as its lead.



## "THE ONLY PUBLICITY ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS WAS VERY LIMITED IN THE LATE SIXTIES – MY FIRST DOOMWATCH SCRIPT WAS COMMISSIONED IN 1969" DON SHAW

➤ Still unhappy about their perceived sidelining, Pedler and Davis hadn't exactly been idle since leaving *Doomwatch*. Soon after vacating their office at the BBC, they contacted producer Tony Tenser at the independent production company, Tigon British Film about the possibility of mounting the next *Doomwatch* story as a standalone feature film for the cinema.

The *Doomwatch* feature film premiered in London in March 1972, almost exactly a year following the broadcast of the final episode of the BBC's second TV series. The central cast of the television show – John Paul, Simon Oates, Jean Trend (who'd joined early in series two as Dr Fay Chantry) and Joby Blanshard – all returned to their familiar roles. However, none of them had a particularly prominent part to play in the film. The central focus of the movie was *Doomwatch*'s latest recruit: scientist adventurer Dr Del Shaw (played by the eminent Ian Bannen).

While other Seventies movie spin-offs of big British television shows (and there were lots) tended to make a virtue of their small-screen casts (like *Steptoe & Son* and *Are You Being Served?*), *Doomwatch* made a deliberate attempt to be different and establish something new. The feeling that this idea may have worked, however, is a little bit undermined by the fact that the movie never

spawned a sequel. Geoff Andrew, writing in *Time Out*, concluded (rather unfairly) that, "the serious intentions of the original series have been forsaken on the big screen for a half-baked horror." Maybe, like the TV series itself, it just found it hard to capitalise on the strength of a single idea.

Meanwhile, back at the BBC, Worth and Dudley had resumed work on the temporarily delayed third television series, and the first episode was broadcast on 5 June 1972.

**The show once** again had solid publicity, including another *Radio Times* front cover (the programme's third). However, it was a very different kind of show. More than ever now, the programme was a procedural – a science-fiction *Z-Cars*, with additional *Play For Today* social relevance. Its angry sense of injustice was targeted at a much messier and less clear-cut world of politics and corporate corruption. The 'science fact' of the show's original premise was nowhere near as central a theme as it had once been, although there was certainly a lot of drama. The first episode ('Fire And Brimstone' by Terence Dudley) showed a tortured Simon Oates holding the world to ransom and later contemplating suicide. There were strong writers too, including Ian Curteis, who later wrote *The Falklands*

*Play*. However, with the BBC's support dwindling, the third series would ultimately prove to be the last – and it wasn't even a full series.

Of the 13 episodes that were projected, only 11 were actually broadcast in this third run, of which one episode ('I Never Promised You A Rose Garden' by Wolf Rilla) was scrapped before a single frame could even be shot. Meanwhile, another was recorded and then never transmitted (See box-out). The series ended with the broadcast of 'The Killer Dolphins' on 14 August 1972.

It is sadly difficult to really say anything very meaningful about *Doomwatch*'s final series, not because it was bad; it clearly had a lot that was good in it. However, of the 11 episodes that were broadcast in Series Three, the BBC archives retain only two, the other nine never being archived at all. A similar fate befell large sections of the first two seasons as well. However, additional copies survived for most of these.

Looking at the show as a whole, out of a total of 39 episodes made, only 24 survive today (and one movie) thanks to the worries of BBC Enterprises' film archive in the mid-Seventies that they were running out of shelf space. Incinerating the only surviving film prints of *Doomwatch* still seems a horrendous solution to the problem, but that was what happened.

Sadly, *Doomwatch* remain a series that deserves a far better appreciation than the archive will probably ever allow us to give it. ☹

To find out more about *Doomwatch*, see *Deadly Dangerous Tomorrow: The Scripts For Six Missing Doomwatch Episodes*, *Prophets Of Doom: The Unauthorised History Of Doomwatch*, and new book *The Quest For Pedler*, from Miwk Publishing.



**FLASHBACK**

# NEVERWHERE

WE RIDE THE LONDON UNDERGROUND WITH THE MAKERS OF NEIL GAIMAN'S NEVERWHERE TO DISCOVER HOW THE SHOW BECAME DERAILED. MIND THE GAP...

WORDS STEPHEN KELLY

**There are two Londons: our London Above and London Below, a world where the capital comes alive. The Earl entertains in his Court, the Knightsbridge asks a toll of death, and the Angel Islington stalks up and down his citadel halls. It's populated by those who've fallen through the cracks of life, like businessman Richard Mayhew.**

This is the gist of Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, an urban fantasy best known as a book, but which originated as a six-part TV series on BBC2. And it's there, in the real London Above, where the lesser-known story is: the one about those who fought against the limitations of their time and lost. For of all the storytelling mediums that could handle Gaiman's imaginative scope, mid-Nineties BBC television was most certainly not one of them.

It was pitched, initially, by co-creator Lenny Henry as a drama built around 'tribes' of the London homeless, the bones of an idea that fellow creator Gaiman then gave fantastical flesh. "I sent him a fax saying, 'I don't want to do [that] because I think I could make it really cool to be homeless in London,'" the author explains. "And I don't ever want some kid having a rotten life somewhere and running away to London because they've seen how cool it is on the telly. But I'll take the idea and turn it three or four twists and make that impossible." And that was the beginning of the idea of London Below; just creating a London that doesn't exist based partly around puns and partly around what I always wonder about London, which is: 'What is going on in the background?'"

Commissioned by the BBC after being brought to the attention of producer Clive Brill and the now-broadcaster Janet Street-Porter (who, at the time, headed up Youth And Entertainment Features), it was to be a fresh fantasy venture for a channel that, seven years earlier, had axed its biggest science fiction franchise, *Doctor Who*.

Rooted in a darker and arguably more adult aesthetic, *Neverwhere* would see Richard – a young, Scottish businessman played by Gary Bakewell – fight to get his life back after a random act of kindness exposes him to a world below the capital that makes

its inhabitants non-existent to those up Above. That act of kindness is unknowingly saving the life of Lady Door (Laura Fraser, now better known as *Breaking Bad*'s Lydia), daughter of Portico, the head of an Underside noble family. Up until his and his family's murder by Door's two pursuing assassins, the wonderfully grotesque little-and-large double-act of Vandemar (Clive Russell) and Croup (Hywel Bennett), Portico had been trying to unite the various fiefdoms and baronies of his world, suggesting a conspiracy.

With Mayhew's life in the normal world ceasing to exist (his fiancée, colleagues, landlord and bank

account all failing to recognise him), he becomes swept up in Door's quest to find out who – or what – hired her family's killers, and falls ever deeper in the bowels of Below. Here, he finds a realm split by sub-cultures and defined by the eccentricity of characters such as Old Bailey (Trevor Peacock), a man clothed in feathers who trades in birds and information, and Hunter (Tanya Moodie), a legendary hunter, who is tracking down prey that even whole regiments of soldiers have failed to kill: the great Beast of London below. It's a world of magic and mystery where markets float from place to place, rats are ranked higher than man and, looking over it all, is its very own angel, Islington (played, remarkably, by the future 12th Doctor Peter Capaldi).

It's a huge vision: one whose ideas and imagery are as broad as they are intricate. Indeed, on paper, aided by Gaiman's stage directions, the script for *Neverwhere* surely thrived on his suggestive power for description – the best pictures, after all, are in your head. But in a time where budgets were low and technology limited, it was a whole different matter.

"It's the grand old BBC tradition: trying to do things that you can't actually afford to do," chuckles Clive Brill, who, along with director Dewi Humphreys, was given the thankless task of rendering the reality of Gaiman's creation. "At the time, I thought we were doing something incredibly fresh and original as far as the story and script were concerned. I always thought the story was brilliant. I always thought this mish-mash of Dickensian against this wild other world was fantastic. I thought it had a lot of wit, and I loved that: the wordplay on the Underground stations and so on.

"I think Neil perhaps wanted more than he could get, though. At the time we were on a pretty restricted budget with the BBC, and I was always aware that we couldn't quite come up to the standard of the technical side of things to make it look as good as we all wanted. There was no way we were going to fulfil his fantasies."

You can see his point. While the location scouting of *Neverwhere* is one of its greatest strengths (with places like Oxford Circus, HMS Belfast and the closed-down British Museum station all explored like never before), there was never any way to match up to what was in Gaiman's head. Take the aforementioned



**"THE GREAT BEAST OF LONDON TURNED OUT TO BE A RATHER SAD-LOOKING COW"**

NEIL GAIMAN



NEVERWHERE  
FLASHBACK





## GOING UNDERGROUND

If you're riding on the Tube today, there may be disruptions to your journey...



### QUATERMASS AND THE PIT (1958)

Professor Bernard Quatermass and a team of scientists are investigating some strange artefacts found during the construction of the Central Line station, Hobbs End. Despite this being a completely fictional station, this will certainly delay any imagined development, and illusory passengers should seek alternative routes.



### PRIMEVAL: SEASON ONE, EPISODE TWO (2007)

The London Underground has been hijacked by giant prehistoric bugs, putting commuters' lives in mortal peril. Reports say the creatures have invaded via a so-called 'time anomaly', SAS soldiers are currently under attack from giant spiders in the tunnels, and there have been sightings of a 15-foot ancestor of the millipede.



### AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON (1981)

Tottenham Court Road station is closed until further notice following the savage murder of a commuter. Witnesses say they saw what looked like a large dog leaving the scene, and police are investigating the possibility that a werewolf is on the rampage. Londoners are advised to stay indoors until further notice.



### DOCTOR WHO AND THE WEB OF FEAR (1968)

Charing Cross tube station has been declared the 'Best Place To Hide From Oncoming Yetis' by the board of Time Lords. This prestigious award follows the Second Doctor's successful concealment from these abominable beasts. However, travellers are warned to stay clear of any unattended items, as they are believed to contain explosives.



### CREEP (2004)

Passengers have been told to avoid the Tube after dark after a young woman was trapped overnight and stalked by a deformed killer. Police have identified him as the mentally ill hermit called 'Craig', also known as The Creep. The authorities are currently trying to prevent hysteria on the Underground by banning posters of a woman's bloodied hand against the front of a Tube train.



Gary Bakewell took the lead as Richard Mayhew.

Knightsbridge, which Mayhew has to cross in order to make it to a re-imagined version of Battersea Power Station, the so-called Floating Market. In the novel it's described as follows: 'It could have been one of the bridges over the Thames, 500 years ago... A huge, stone bridge spanning out over a vast black chasm, into the night,' before Mayhew is attacked in a huge, abstract sequence in which 'Night is happening. All the nightmares that have come out when the sun goes down, since the cave times, when we huddled together in fear for safety and warmth.'

With such meagre resources at their disposal, how could Humphreys and Brill ever realise that? The answer: they couldn't. In the show, that scene is abruptly short, and the bridge itself would barely fit a troll beneath it. Other sequences suffered too, of course. A scene where a huge monstrous arm was supposed to pop out from underneath a train and grab Mayhew (because he didn't 'mind the gap') was cut, while, as Brill explains, "The effect that I still wince at is the vampire-esque figure, played by Tamsin Greig, and there's this bit where she's sucking the life out of [Mayhew], and we had to put some green smoke to instigate that. You can tell to this day that it's quite a cheap effect."

Perhaps the most contentious disappointment, however, is the Beast of London. Featuring in the third act of the story, the much-anticipated monster is described in the novel as having 'broken spears, and shattered swords, and rusted knives, bristling from its back and sides. The yellow flare light glinted in its red eyes, and on its tusks, and on its hooves. It lowered its massive head. It was some kind of boar,





Unfortunately, the TV series couldn't do justice to Neil Gaiman's vision.



thought Richard, and then realised that that had to be nonsense: no boar could be so huge. It was the size of an ox, of a bull elephant, of a lifetime.'

On the screen, not so much. "I remember my great sorrow when the great Beast of London turned out to be a rather sad-looking cow," Gaiman recalls. "It walked around the corner, and this thing that you've been building up to for several hours comes round and you go, 'Oh, that's a Highland Cow.'

"I think if I'd loved what we achieved on TV, I would never have written a novel," he continues.

"The novel for me existed because I was dissatisfied and disgruntled by the TV version. There was some beautiful aspects, but it just wasn't the thing that I wanted it to be."

On the topic of not-so-fond recollection, Brill shares similar sentiments. "To be quite honest, the Beast of London was shit," he says. "I remember going out to farms looking at these boars. They didn't look slightly threatening. So at the time we got the boar into some derelict building we managed to inhabit, and it was the scene where the boar was charging. Needless to say, the boar wouldn't really move. It certainly wouldn't rush at us; we couldn't get any sense of power or speed. So when you look back at the program now, it was shot in lots of tiny little bits to try and make it look more threatening and powerful than it ever was. But of course, there was nothing available to us at the time. We just simply didn't begin to have the computing processing power, because that's what we would have done, obviously. We would have created it on a computer if we could have done."

## "IF I'D LOVED WHAT WE ACHIEVED ON TV, I WOULD NEVER HAVE WRITTEN A NOVEL"

NEIL GAIMAN

It's safe to say that these isolated problems wouldn't have seemed so striking if they had not been magnified by *Neverwhere*'s overall problem: filming on video. Despite Humphreys and Brill wanting to shoot on the more expensive and better-quality film, the BBC wouldn't allow them, instead promising that if they shot on the cheaper, less cinematic video then the footage would be 'filmed' later on to make it look more cinematic. This, however, never happened. The BBC backed out on their promise, and left a show that had been lit and shot for film to be broadcast in video, like petrol in a diesel engine. The result was, unsurprisingly, garish and cheap. "It looked like an old episode of *Doctor Who*," admits Brill. "It just looked flat."


The *Doctor Who* comparison is apt. For just as that show was cancelled in 1989 by a controller who had "little interest or sympathy in science fiction," the BBC's betrayal was perhaps an ominous signifier of *Neverwhere*'s greatest obstacle: mainstream British television's staggering indifference to fantasy. This, after all, was a period in which American TV was broadcasting the likes of *Twin Peaks*, *The X-Files* and, a year later,

*Stargate SG-1*. Britain, on the other hand, didn't even know what to do with Sherlock Holmes.

Gaiman agrees: it was a matter of the wrong place at the wrong time. "I remember interviewing directors for *Neverwhere* back in 1996, and having them say things like, 'Erm... well, it's fantasy, so it's for children?' And I was going, 'Well, no.' And another guy going, 'Look I've read the script, but you know, what you're trying to do... it's funny, it's scary, it's an adventure. And you have to pick one. You can't do all three.' We were simply four or five years ahead of our time."

Retrospectively, *Neverwhere*'s TV origins might seem like a shame, but it wasn't just a noble failure; it was a necessary one. Regardless of its style, this was television that functioned on dark, grown-up substance. It operated on the thesis that fantasy wasn't just for children, but could be used to tell stories that other genres could not.

For most, it is only a footnote in fantastical history, although it would be churlish to overlook its contribution to not only Gaiman's career, but to the state of British fantasy TV in the 21st Century. *Being Human*, *Misfits*, *Doctor Who* – would we have these shows now if it wasn't for the likes of *Neverwhere*? Those in London Above may have wanted it to be so much more, but they'll just have to settle for being a glimmer of the future.

As Brill says himself, with pride rather than regret, "If we made it again today, it would be utterly sensational." 

Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* is available on DVD now.





"HERE HE IS, A SENSITIVE, EDUCATED  
MAN WHO SUCCUMBS TO THE  
DARK SHADOW SIDE OF HIS OWN  
NATURE – THIS IS THE HUMAN  
CONDITION"

TED KOTCHEFF







INTERVIEW

DRINKING &  
FIGHTING WITH

TED KOTCHEFF

TED KOTCHEFF DID FOR THE OUTBACK WHAT JAWS DID FOR THE OCEAN IN 1971'S WAKE IN FRIGHT. WE CAUGHT UP WITH HIM TO FIND OUT HOW A CANADIAN 'HIPPIE' BECAME THE GODFATHER OF AUSTRALIAN HORROR...

WORDS JAMES HOARE



**"It's really, really, incredibly gratifying for me," says director Ted Kotcheff of the recent restoration and even more recent home release of *Wake In Fright* after four decades with only one battered print as its legacy.**

"Any writer, poet, painter, director – one of the things you always hope for your work is longevity, that it will transcend the time that it was made and have relevance and meaning for people in the future."

From its real footage of a kangaroo hunt to its sudden, unexpected and heavily implied rape, *Wake In Fright* offered much to dwell on. Originally released in 1971, this sweat-streaked journey into madness cut right to the heart of Australia's Outback culture: the aggressive friendliness, the desperate violence and the oppressive scale of the landscape, all endless dirt and empty blue sky. It's no mean feat for a Canadian director (and a British screenwriter, Evan Jones) to have produced what songwriter Nick Cave describes as "The most terrifying film about Australia in existence."

It's horrific, but *Wake In Fright* can't truly be described as a horror film, lurking in that strange twilight realm alongside the likes of *Vertigo* (with which it shares a mental breakdown), *Jaws* (tyranny of open space) and *Straw Dogs* (a rural descent into barbarism).



A psychological horror if pushed, *Wake In Fright* is the tale of sneering, urbane school-teacher John Grant (Gary Bond) who finds himself cast away in 'the Yabba', a raucous frontier town that entraps him in a cycle of drink, sex, violence and sexual violence. It was a catalyst for the Australian New Wave of cinema ("They all said to me, 'You know Ted, you're responsible for the Australian film renaissance, because when we were young we thought the only way we could make it was to go to America,'" beams Kotcheff), but its legacy can also be seen heavily in Ozploitation-infused Outback gistle like 1978's *Long Weekend*, 1984's *Razorback* and 2005's *Wolf Creek*.

Filmed in the mining town of Broken Hill, New South Wales – also used for *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* – Kotcheff discovered that the gradually more sinister boisterousness that closes round John's neck like an amiable noose (and still infects characters like *Wolf Creek*'s Mick Taylor) was very real.

"I looked like a Sixties hippie – I had long hair down to the middle of my back and I had a handlebar moustache – and I went into a pub. When I walked in, 40 drunken pairs of eyes looked at me," remembers the director.

"The whole room was silent, like a John Ford Western. I ordered a schooner of ale, and the drunken guy next to me looked at my moustache and said [slurs] 'Hello Stalin!' inviting the response, 'Who the fuck are you calling Stalin?' Biff! – then he stuck his jaw right in my face and yelled it even louder, quietened the whole room: 'I said, 'Hello Stalin.'" Everybody watched me and I said, 'Listen, I'd love to talk to you, but I'm dead.' He didn't get it for a minute and then he got it and started to laugh, the whole room started to laugh. And he said 'I love a bloke with a sense of humour – give this man a schooner of ale!'

"Well, those guys in that pub became my protectors. Some guy would say, 'Come on, let's fight!' I'd say 'No, no, I've got no quarrel with ya.' He'd go 'Nah, come

on, come on!' He'd stick his jaw in my face and a voice would go [sternly] 'Joe, leave Ted alone – he's my mate.' 'Ahhh, sorry Alan, sorry Davy – Ted, let me buy you a beer!'" laughs Kotcheff.

"What I discovered was, of course, that they didn't want to hit me; they wanted me to hit them. In that town the men outnumber the women three to one – there's no women, there's no brothels and there's no homosexuality. I asked someone, 'What do they do for human contact? – 'They fight.'"

Despite showing at the 1971 Cannes Film Festival (where it left such an impression on a young Martin Scorsese that he brought the restored version back to the festival in 2009) and a strong critical response, *Wake In Fright* didn't make an impact in Australia, its themes perhaps too direct and uncompromising for a nation still wrestling with 'cultural cringe'.

"I think people were very affronted by the depiction of the Aussie male," observes Kotcheff ruefully. "Jeff Thompson, one of the actors in the film, told me that at one cinema a man rose, pointed at the screen and yelled out 'This is not us!' Another voice cried out, 'Sit down you fool, it is us.'"

"My point is that this is not about Australian men only; this is about all men. John Grant embarks on this odyssey of self-discovery and here he is, a sensitive educated man who succumbs to the dark shadow side of his own nature. This is the human condition. We're all in the same boat.

"This guy discovers that his sense of superiority is totally unwarranted. He does things he'd never dreamed of to prove his virility, and becomes one of them. Education and civilisation are the defence against the yahoo in each one of us, not just Australians, and we're all capable of things that are morally wrong."



*Wake In Fright* is out now on dual-format DVD and Blu-ray.



IN 1989, TWO YOUNG HIGH SCHOOLERS STEPPED BACK IN TIME AND INTO MOVIE HISTORY. JOIN SCIFINOW AS WE MAKE A MOST TRIUMPHANT JOURNEY TO SAN DIMAS TO REMEMBER HOW BILL AND TED TAUGHT US ABOUT WORLD HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, RESPONSIBILITY AND BEING EXCELLENT TO EACH OTHER...



WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

# BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE



## Film

**RUNNING TIME:**

90 minutes

**RELEASE DATE:**

17 February 1989

**DIRECTOR:**

Stephen Herek

**WRITERS:** Chris Matheson,  
Ed Solomon

**CAST:** Keanu Reeves, Alex  
Winter, George Carlin

## About

Bill and Ted are two amiable high schoolers in the California suburb of San Dimas who dream of becoming rock stars with their band, the Wyld Stallyns. However, they're flunking history, and if they don't ace their final presentation they'll both get Fs and Ted will be sent to military school.

Thankfully, help from the future is on its way, as future-dweller Rufus arrives to lend the boys his time machine. Can they gather all the figures from history that they need, bring them back to the present day and put on a show that will save the future?

**"All we are is dust in the wind, dude." In the pantheon of Eighties comedies, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* stands alone.** There's none of the motormouth consumerist swagger of Ferris Bueller or the whispered joys of conformity to be found in John Hughes' high school tales. Bill S Preston Esquire (Alex Winter) and Ted 'Theodore' Logan (Keanu Reeves) stand apart because their amiable cluelessness is not a front. They are aware of their limitations, but they know these can be overcome. Their goals aren't unreasonable and their dreams aren't selfish. There's no ulterior motive behind Bill and Ted's message of "Be excellent to each other"; they're simply excellent people.

The scene in which we first meet Bill and Ted demonstrates why they work so well as a duo. "Ted," begins Bill, "while I agree that, in time, our band will be most triumphant, the truth is Wyld Stallyns will never be a super band until we have Eddie Van Halen on guitar." "Yes, Bill," counters Ted. "But, I do not believe we will get Eddie Van Halen until we have a triumphant video." "Ted, it's pointless to have a triumphant video before we even have decent instruments," Bill replies. "Well, how can we have decent instruments when we don't really even know how to play?" asks Ted. "That is why we need Eddie Van Halen!" answers Bill. "And that is why we need a triumphant video!" agrees Ted, and they shout "Excellent!" in unison. With a few short lines of dialogue, Bill and Ted are

established as dreamers who have some grasp of the real world, but not enough to keep them from a joyful state for very long. Other films relegate these characters to second fiddle or even further into the background, assuming that teen audiences want a sensitive popular kid or a street-smart wise-ass to lead their comedies. Those films are wrong.

It's hard to think of teen comedy leads who are as entirely lovable as Bill and Ted. Every detail about them is perfect, from their self-made band T-shirts to the slang-heavy dialogue that has, rather than dating, become something close to poetry. They're beautifully performed by Winter

triumphant! Ah, Ted, don't be dead, dude." However, when our leads are this likeable, frankly we don't want them to be put through too much.

These aren't characters who should be confronted with any real trauma. Their natural state is one of wonder, amazement and joy, and sending them back through time is simply genius. In a time when *Doctor Who's* wibbly wobbly timey wimey-ness has been replaced with great reams of paradox-threatening bullshit, the explanation that Bill and Ted get from Rufus (George Carlin) feels like a blessed relief. As the phone box travels through time, Rufus explains the white tubes as "The

circuits of history," which will take them anywhere that they want to go. When Bill asks how, Rufus simply responds "Modern technology, William." When their

plans to resolve their problems from the future work out, we're as pleased as they are. They express wonder at the places and times they visit, even if it is filtered through terms and ideas they understand. Ted describes Greece in 400 BCE as "a time when most of the world looked like the cover of the Led Zeppelin album, *Houses Of The Holy*." "We were there," adds Bill "There were many steps and columns. It was most tranquil."

However, we shouldn't assume that *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* is as dumb as its two main characters (who, quite frankly, aren't quite as thick as they appear to be). The script from Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon is carefully constructed, creating

## "IT'S HARD TO THINK OF TEEN COMEDY LEADS WHO ARE AS LOVABLE AS BILL AND TED"

and Reeves, so much so that there's a good chance that any bad review the latter receives will compare him to Ted Logan. A lot of their charm is in the writing. They're not cynical or arrogant, and they work hard to achieve their goals. There's not even an element of pulling the wool over anyone's eyes with their presentation of some of history's most important figures. They went and got them, and here they are.

In fairness, the hardships they encounter are never too serious. They're nearly executed in medieval England, although the moment in which Bill thinks Ted has been killed is far more effective, allowing Winter to deliver a most triumphant soliloquy. "Bogus! Heinous! Most non-





# BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

RETRO CLASSIC

## CLASSIC QUOTES

"TED, YOU AND I HAVE WITNESSED MANY THINGS, BUT NOTHING AS BODACIOUS AS WHAT JUST HAPPENED"  
**BILL**

"THIS IS A DUDE WHO, 700 YEARS AGO, TOTALLY RAVAGED CHINA, AND WHO, WE WERE TOLD, TWO HOURS AGO, TOTALLY RAVAGED OSHMAN'S SPORTING GOODS"  
**TED**

"IT SEEMS TO ME THE ONLY THING YOU'VE LEARNED IS THAT CAESAR IS A 'SALAD DRESSING DUDE'"  
**MR RYAN**

"BOGUS. HEINOUS. MOST NON-TRIUMPHANT. AH, TED, DON'T BE DEAD, DUDE"  
**BILL**

"BILLY, YOU ARE DEALING WITH THE ODDITY OF TIME TRAVEL WITH THE GREATEST OF EASE"  
**BILL**

"SO, BILL, WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME, ESSENTIALLY, IS THAT NAPOLEON WAS A SHORT DEAD DUDE"  
**MR RYAN**

"TED, WHILE I AGREE THAT, IN TIME, OUR BAND WILL BE MOST TRIUMPHANT. THE TRUTH IS, WYLD STALLYNS WILL NEVER BE A SUPER BAND UNTIL WE HAVE EDDIE VAN HALEN ON GUITAR"  
**BILL**



Keanu Reeves' performances as Ted would lead on to bigger – but perhaps not always better – things.





## RETRO CLASSIC

### BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE



➤ a world in which reality hovers at the edges. We're shown what real stupidity looks like as jock Ox delivers his history presentation. "Everything is different, but the same... things are more modern than before... bigger, and yet smaller... it's computers... San Dimas High School football rules!"

It's not too difficult to see why Bill and Ted seek out a blissful fantasy in which they are rock gods: the real world presents too much of a threat to their happiness. Bill's dad is married to Missy ("I mean... Mom"), a gorgeous young woman who's only a couple of years older than her stepson – Ted even asked her to prom once. In one of the film's most unsettling scenes, Mr Preston (J Patrick McNamara) ignores his son to stare at his young bride before ushering Bill and Ted out of the room to undoubtedly consummate his marriage on his son's bed. It's perhaps

## "SOCRATES IS PERHAPS THE BIGGEST REVELATION AS BILLY THE KID'S WINGMAN"

less of a problem than military school, but no less creepy.

The problems that haunt Bill and Ted's psyches would be explored in more nightmarish detail in the admittedly superior sequel, *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*, but the clue to the films' separate agendas is in the titles. The strange things that are afoot at the Circle K are excellent indeed, and this goes for the historical figures that the duo abduct. Billy the Kid (Dan Shor) is a genial con artist who proves to a helpful ally after Bill and Ted rescue him from an angry mob. "Billy, you are dealing with the oddity of time travel with the greatest of ease!" While Abraham

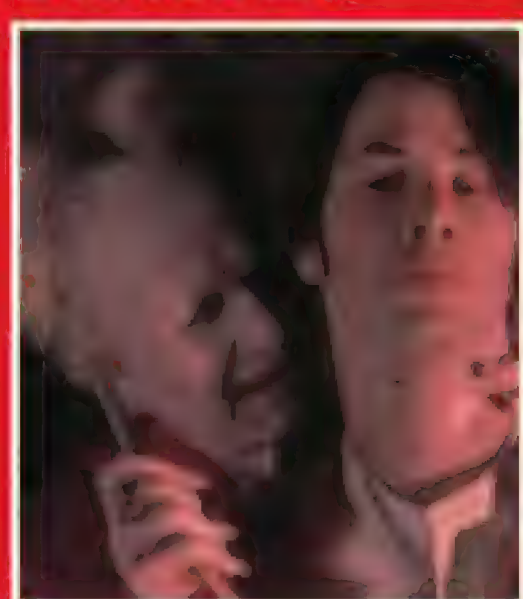
Lincoln (Robert Barron), Sigmund Freud (Rod Loomis) and Beethoven (Clifford David) conform to stereotype, Matheson and Solomon's script has some fun with the other passengers.

Genghis Khan (Al Leong)'s appetite for destruction is now fuelled by the excellent sugar high delivered by Twinkies. Joan of Arc (played by The Go-Go's guitarist Jane Wiedlin) is struck by an aerobics display and tells Bill and Ted that she will implement a similar regimen for her armies back in France. Socrates (Tony Steedman) is perhaps the biggest revelation, acting as Billy the Kid's wingman while chatting up two girls in the

## "STRANGE THINGS ARE AFOOT"

5 most Ted-like Keanu Reeves performances

### BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA



1 Keanu is perfectly cast as nice-but-dim Jonathan Harker, stirring in his awful English accent to Francis Ford Coppola's over-rich pudding.

### JOHNNY MNEMONIC



2 Here, he is the calm centre of this misjudged shitstorm of a William Gibson adaptation, which starred Dolph Lundgren, Henry Rollins, Ice-T and a dolphin.

### THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE



3 Reeves counter-balances Al Pacino's frothy ranting with cool professionalism as a Florida attorney who realises that his new boss is actually Satan.



# BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

## RETRO CLASSIC



Bill and Ted's journey through time sees them pick up an array of historical figures.



Joan of Arc was memorably played by The Go Go's guitarist Jane Wiedlin.

mall before cackling at Freud's attempts at a come-on: "Geek!"

All these historical figures are given their own endearing characteristics, and they all go along with Bill and Ted quite happily. Fittingly, Napoleon (Terry Camilleri) stands apart. He's the first figure that they abduct, and Ted decides to leave him in the hands of his younger brother Deacon (Frazier Bain), who promptly ditches him at the bowling alley. "Deacon, do you realise you have just stranded one of Europe's greatest leaders in San Dimas?" asks Ted. "He was a dick!" Deacon responds, as confirmed by his behaviour at Waterloo waterpark.

One character who is far more deserving of our respect is, of course, Rufus. The time-travelling, self-described professional is given the perfect level of laid-back charm by the late great Carlin. Rufus has the dash of self-awareness necessary for any character who addresses

the audience directly, but it's balanced by a real love and admiration for the two kids he's been sent back to help out. If *Bill & Ted 3* ever actually happens – and Winter and Reeves seem to be convinced that it will – the film will have a big Carlin-shaped hole.

Rufus' closing statement to the audience, "They do get better," is a nice concession to the audience, but it also reaffirms what makes Bill and Ted so charming. Although they ace their history report, not too much has changed for the two. They do have their historical babes, who join their band, but they're not suddenly rich or famous or even talented; they are still in the garage trying their best to become better musicians. They're still having an excellent time, and they still have each other. "The only true wisdom comes from knowing you know nothing," quotes Bill from 'So-crates'. "That's us, dude!" exclaims Ted. Most triumphant, indeed. 🐸

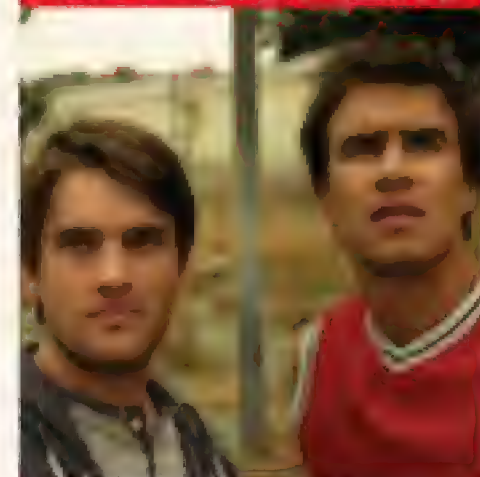
### WATCH FIRST



### BACK TO THE FUTURE (1985)

Robert Zemeckis' classic was such a huge influence on the film that Rufus' time machine was initially a car.

### WATCH NEXT

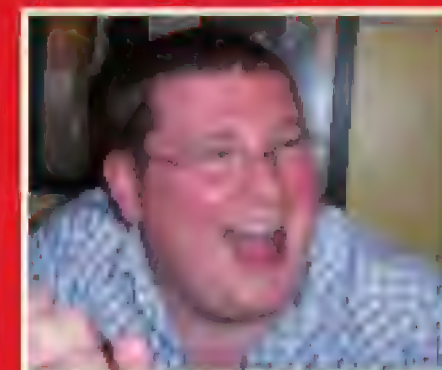


### JOHN DIES AT THE END (2012)

Two slackers are forced to face a Lovecraftian apocalypse and save mankind in Don Coscarelli's ambitious genre mash.

## YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



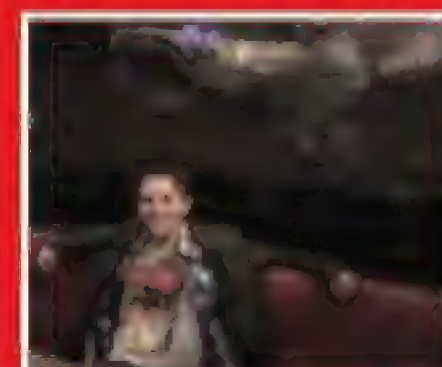
"Still bodacious, dude! The Police Station/Bin/Keys bit was obviously an influence on a young timey wimey Steven Moffat!"  
@lutley73



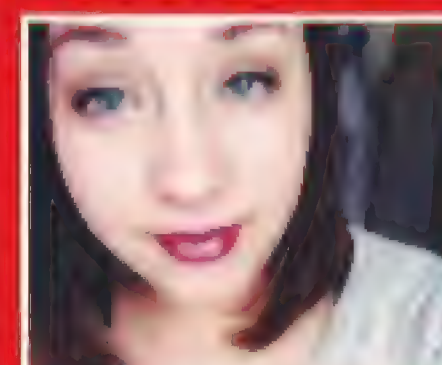
"Changed time travel rules in films since (eg *Frequency*) and best ethos of "be excellent to each other".  
@Christi77974829



"It's a true product of it's time, and that's reason why it remains so endearing to a lot of people. Cult Classic? Definitely"  
@AaronDarlington



"It's still most excellent but I think it's safe to say they're vision of the future looks quite twee these days."  
@Tim\_M\_Matthews



"Most triumphant! Forever and always!"  
@catcatcatwag

### THE MATRIX



**4** His Neo is the perfect confused audience identification point for the Wachowskis' sci-fi action classic. "I know kung-fu" aside, he even does the "Whoah!"

### THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL



**5** Reeves is cannily cast by Scott Derrickson in the 2008 remake's version of Klaatu; a blank slate who may or may not be benign. Shame about the film.





# THE SCIFINOW CHUCK QUIZ

SO YOU THINK YOU COULD BECOME AN HONORARY MEMBER OF THE NERD HERD? PUT YOUR BEST FLASH FACE FORWARD AND FIND OUT. NO INTERSECTS ALLOWED

## NERD HERDERS

1. Which cast member almost landed the part of Morgan instead of actor Joshua Gomez?
2. What is Chuck's full name?
3. What hangs above Big Mike's desk?
4. The Buy More and its Nerd Herd is a parody of what real life supermarket?
5. Name the song that Jeffster! performed in the *Chuck* finale 'Chuck Versus The Goodbye'.

## SECRET AGENTS

6. How does Casey like his coffee?
7. What is Chuck's favourite kind of footwear?
8. Which of the following disguises has Sarah Walker not tried: A) Drunk Texan tourist

- B) Supermodel C) Dentist?
9. What's Sarah's middle name?
  10. Who uttered the smooth, *Casablanca*-referencing farewell, "We'll always have Omaha"?

## CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

11. Chuck and Morgan dress up as a sandworm one Halloween, but what franchise is it from?
12. Name the fraternity that Chuck belonged to at Stanford University.
13. Where does Chuck keep his various pieces of false identification?
14. Chuck defeats enemy agents and says, "I know kung-fu," but what movie character famously uttered this line first?
15. What was the government codename for the

Intersect computer database where Stephen Bartowski acted as the chief designer?

## FAN-FAVOURITE CAMEOS

16. Name the horror legend that appeared in the Halloween special, 'Chuck Versus The Aisle Of Terror'.
17. What does Stan Lee do to embarrass himself at the CIA's Christmas party?
18. Mark Hamill joins the dark side on *Chuck* as a villain of what nationality?
19. Which catchphrase from *The Terminator* franchise did Linda Hamilton borrow in the role of Chuck's mother?
20. Who played the part of Casey's old rival and romantic interest?

**DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL!** See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system

**CHUCK** 16-20  
We can't be completely sure you didn't ace this quiz thanks to the Intersect 2.0, but even when you weren't pulling those strange expressions you were pretty nifty at solving super-spy problems.

**SARAH** 11-15  
Whether it's working at the Weinerlicious with a straight face or running from explosions in high heels while simultaneously battling a wind machine and slow-mo, you get the job done.

**MORGAN** 6-10  
Forgetting that blip where you forgot who Luke Skywalker was and abandoned your pals, you've been a loyal friend. Dumb decisions aside, you're a valued member of Team Bartowski.

**CASEY** 0-5  
Through brute force you wrestled the answers off us, so we're docking points. A man of few words, you grunted and mumbled about ending our miserable existence, but you have a heart of gold really.

**ANSWERS:** 1. VIK SAHAY (LESTER) 2. CHARLES IRVING BARTOWSKI 3. A MARLIN 4. BEST BUY AND THE GEEK SQUAD 5. TAKE ON ME 6. BLACK AND BITTER 7. CONVERSE CHUCK TAYLOR ALL-STARS 8. C) DENTIST 9. USA 10. BRUCE LARKIN 11. FRANK HERBERT'S DUNE 12. GAMMA DELTA PHI 13. UNDER HIS BED IN A SHOEBOX 14. NEO IN THE MATRIX 15. ORION 16. ROBERT ENGLUND 17. ASKS GENERAL BECKMAN FOR A KISS 18. FRENCH 19. "COME WITH ME IF YOU WANT TO LIVE" 20. CARRIE-ANNE MOSS



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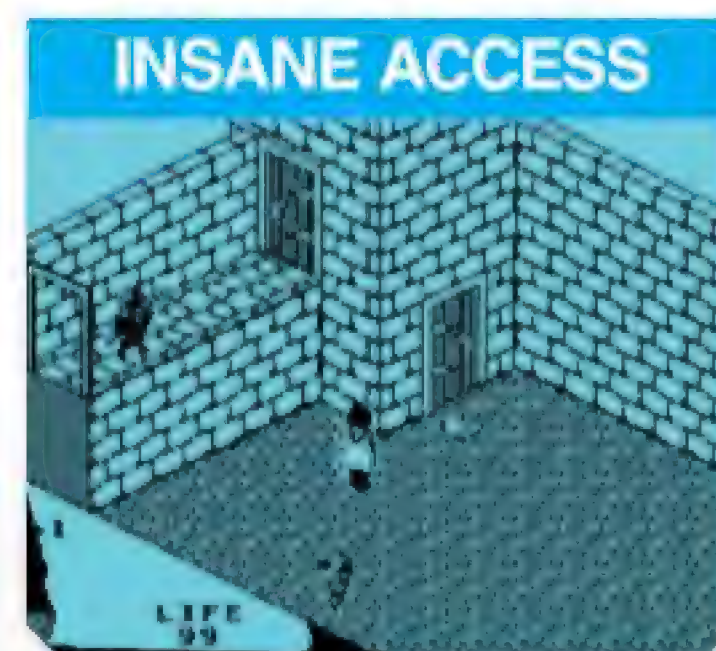
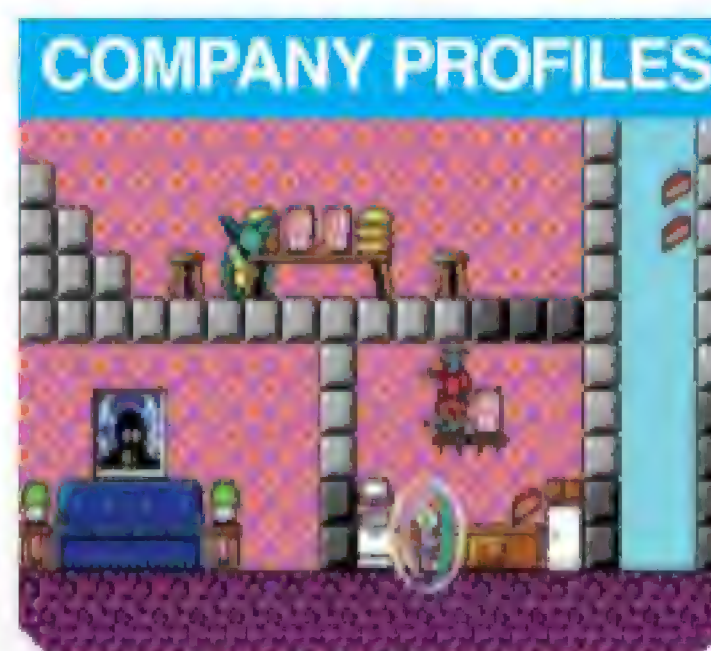
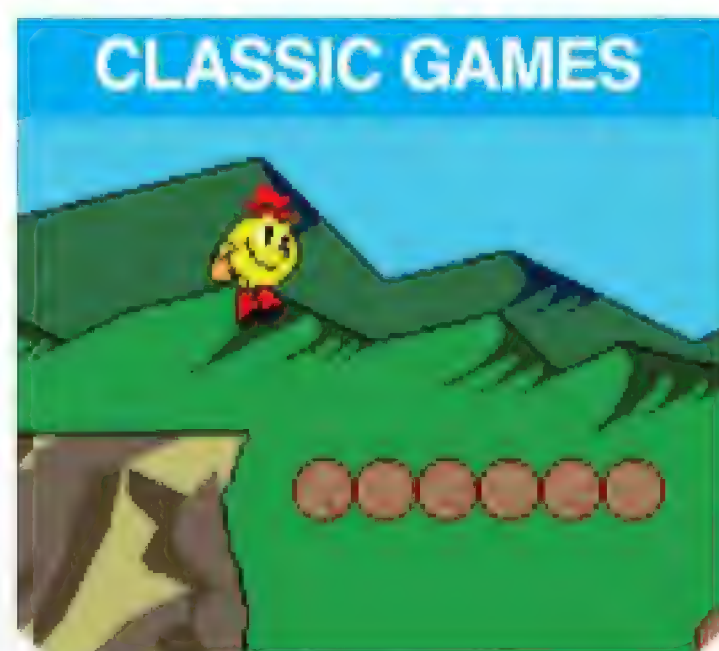


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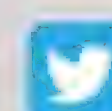
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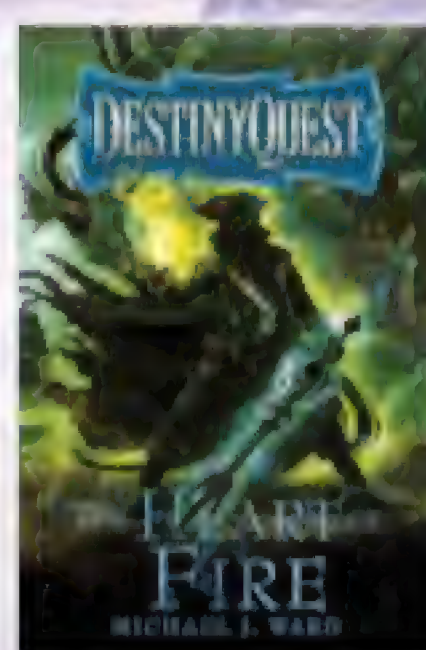
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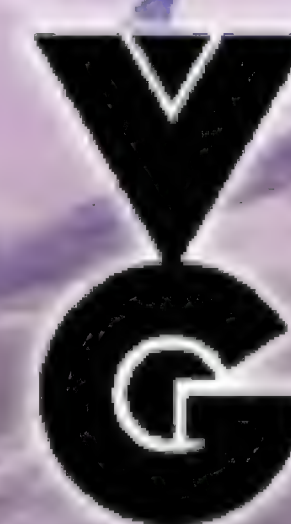
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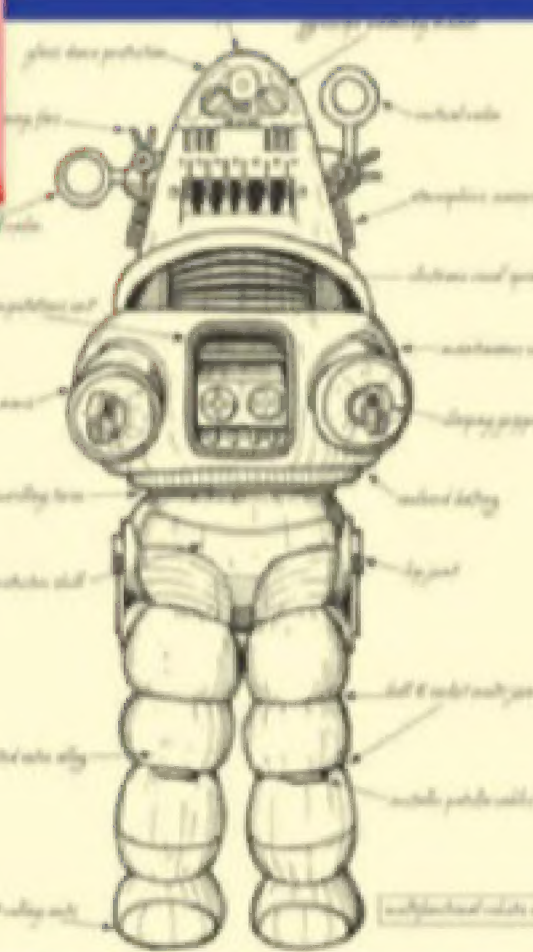
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15 CONTAINS STRONG BLOODY VIOLENCE  
AND STRONG LANGUAGE

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## IN CINEMAS APRIL 11